

COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

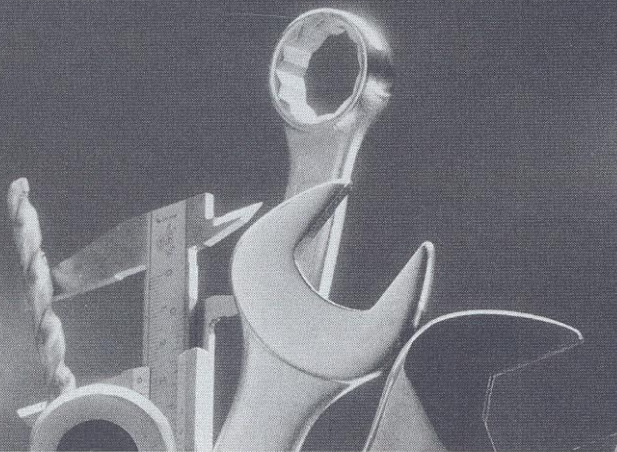
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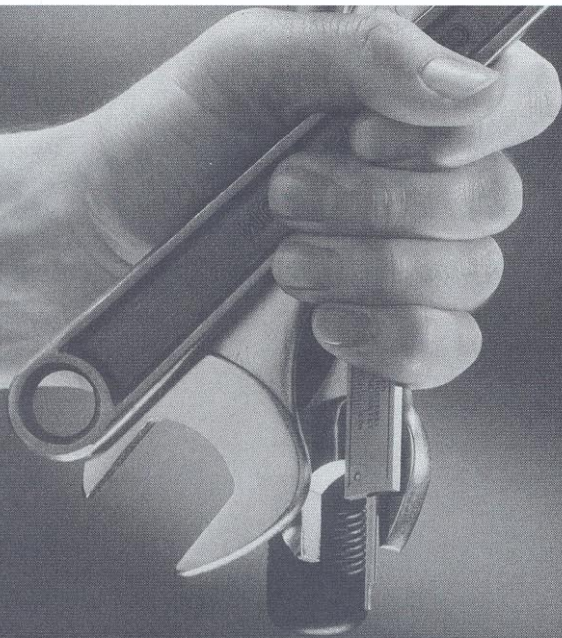
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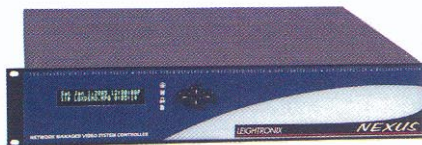
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Summer 2005

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by Shannon Petrello (see page 24)

Media Literacy

Up Front

The Inevitability of Progress, Part One 7
by Anthony Riddle

Powerful Media 9
by Mike Wassenaar

2006 Alliance Board of Directors 11
Media Literacy as Social Change 13
by Belinda Rawlins & Jeff Smith

Articles

Making Media That Matters In Minutes 14
by Rob Williams, Ph.D.

The Radical Education Roadshow 18
by Anne Elizabeth Moore

In Her Image: Producing Womanhood in America 22
by Julia Barry

Playing Dead 24
by Shannon Petrello

The Cinema of Power Relationships: Low Tech, High Concept 26
by Tom Zaniello

Seventh Graders Talk Back ... In a **Good** Way! 28
by Claudia Crase

More Media, Not More News 32
by Francis Rolt

Re-inventing the Wheels of Social Change 34
by James Piecowye

Making Media That Matters In Minutes 37
by John Arke

De-stigmatize This 40
by Antonio Correia

The Last Word

As the journal of the Alliance for Community Media, **Community Media Review** shall support the Alliance mission by providing: a comprehensive overview of past, present and future issues critical to the Alliance and its membership; vigorous and thoughtful debate on those issues; and a venue for members and like-minded groups to present issues critical to the Alliance.



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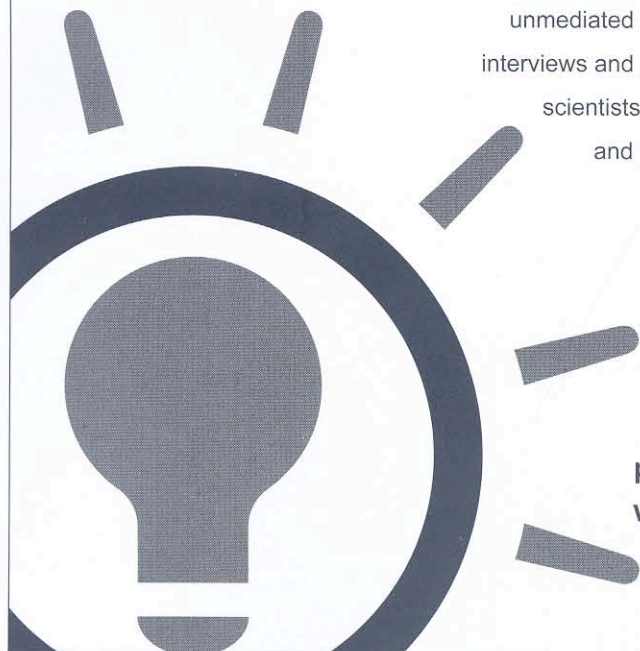
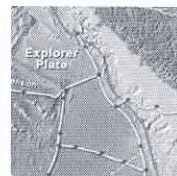
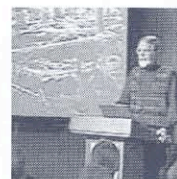
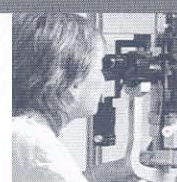


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The Inevitability of Progress, Part One

by Anthony Riddle

"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable ... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WE FIND THESE WORDS to be self-evident. None but a few of us in the Alliance do this work to become rich. We engage in this struggle because we believe in its transformative power on the communities in which we live. Believe the idea that we struggle to bring people together, to encourage the mastery of technology, to create a process of democratic communications, to help people understand themselves and their relationship to the world of technology they create for themselves.

The world of technology that they create for themselves.

Let this be well understood: That it is we who create technology. That we create the technology for our own purposes. That we must make those purposes clear. And that the technology we create must serve those purposes — never the other way around.

In the sense of the words of Dr. King above, there is nothing automatic about the direction of technology or "progress," there is nothing inevitable about the form of invention, there is nothing innately beautiful about innovation that is not directly related to the values we hold as a people.

The focus on media literacy by the Alliance and other practitioners in the community media field is precisely a response to the helplessness so many people feel before the onslaught of high budget movie extravaganzas, 24-hour cable news, mass emailing, endless web-surfing, the rise of blogs, the consolidation of commercial television and radio. Everyday, new media is thrown our way. Its messages come at us faster, sometimes, than we are able

to decode it. We are filled with messages which contradict what we know from our "real" lives.

Quoting Jerry Mander from his book, *Ten Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, "Americans have not grasped the fact that many technologies determine their own use, their own effects, and even the kind of people who control them. We have not yet learned to think of technology as having ideology built into its very form."

If our communities are to stand and play a role in determining the direction any new technology takes, then they first have to understand, on a very conscious level, how media is developed, how it is ingested, who controls it and what its purposes are. Media literacy is not a hobby for elite scholars. Media literacy is as fundamental to our citizenship as the right to vote. What good is freedom of choice without access to information? What good is information without understanding?

If we are to mobilize communities to take control of their own communications destiny, we must begin by entrusting them with the ability to understand fully the relationships between subject, camera, eye, mind and power.

It is not enough to embrace change. We must confront change. We must deconstruct change. We must engage our community in that deconstruction. Then, we must rebuild change in the image of that process of community. This can only be accomplished by a people who are media literate. **CMR**



Anthony Riddle is the Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media

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Powerful Media

by Mike Wassenaar

THE MOST POWERFUL piece of media I have seen in the last six months is a six-minute video feature called *Fatherless*. Through poetry, collage and interviews, *Fatherless* talks about the effect growing up without a father has had on African-American teenagers.

The most remarkable thing about *Fatherless* is that it was produced by two sixteen year-old young women who have clarity on an issue that adults twice their age rarely display. What's not remarkable to me is that these two young producers did their work directly as a result of media literacy training.

Media literacy as a discipline presents a unique opportunity for community access television organizations and media centers as we look to the future. Many centers already implicitly support this type of work. We teach people how to become producers, rather than consumers of media. We help non-profits, community groups or government organizations tell their stories to audiences because commercial media aren't interested in them. We connect people with communities. And we're actually pretty good at the "how" of this business.

But many times we're not good at the "why" of community media, the reason for all of our day-to-day activity. Perhaps it's because many practitioners of community media fell into their profession, rather than receive a "calling." Or it could be the lack of institutional memory in many organizations. Or perhaps the independent spirit and culture of D-I-Y that pervades much of what we do isolates us from others in our profession. There are probably many other valid reasons why many of us are bad at explaining the "why" of community media. Whatever the case, I'm not surprised that many people who work in an access media environment cannot come up with a solid answer when critics say, "You teach folks to produce rather

than consume media ... SO WHAT?"

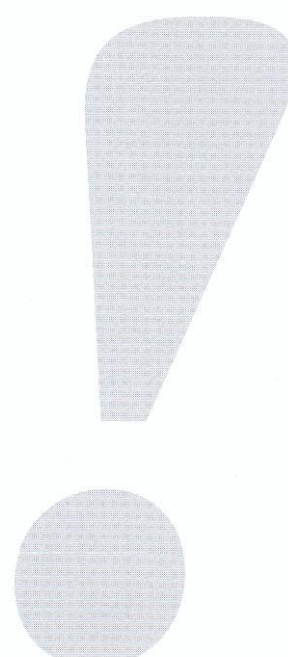
Media literacy provides a "so what," and posits the need for an engaged populace in an active democracy. And it provides a strong sense of mission for the educational work that access television and media centers do in our communities. We may be teaching IRE levels and editing techniques, but at the same time we should be teaching necessary skills to engage other people in our profoundly "mediated" democracy.

Which brings me back to the video, *Fatherless*. The piece produced by the two sixteen year-olds started as an exercise in video instruction, and the crafting of messages in modern television. The piece is now being used in after-school classes in our community to help teenagers make better choices with their lives, and think about the effect they may have on the next generation. It may seem a small case, but I would argue that's media power we shouldn't ignore. **CMR**



Mike Wassenaar is Executive Director of Saint Paul Neighborhood Network and is the Chair of the National Board of the Alliance for Community Media.

Mike can be reached at wassenaar@spnn.org



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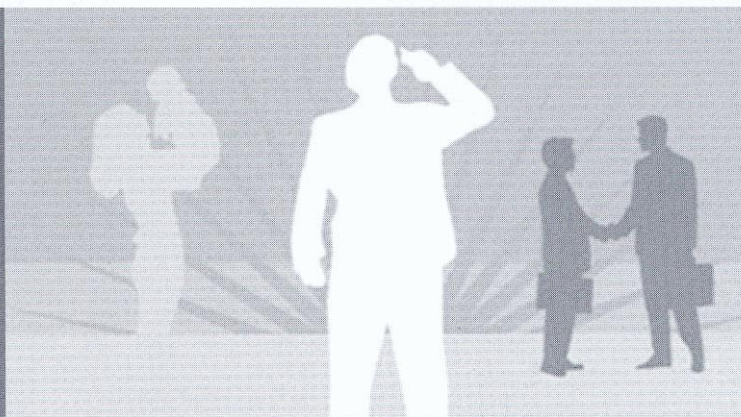
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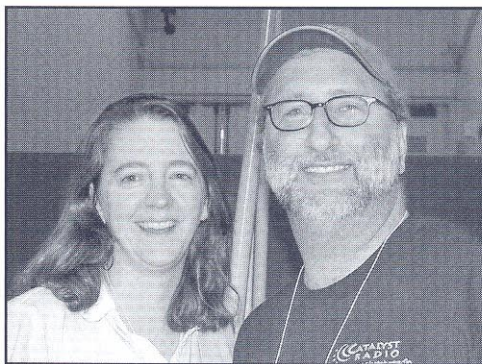
Media Literacy as Social Change

by Belinda Rawlins & Jeff Smith

“AT SIX MONTHS OF AGE, the same age they are imitating simple sounds like mama, babies are forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots.” This comment, by kids marketing guru, psychologist James McNeal, in many ways illustrates for why it is incumbent upon us to teach media literacy, critical thinking in our media work. Hell, even if we don't do media work teaching critical thinking skills should be a priority. Wait, let me try that one more time ... we should make it a priority to practice media literacy in our lives.

Essentially, this issue of Community Media Review attempts to reflect the wide variety of ways people and organizations are practicing Media Literacy. Some people take on gender representation, while others look at labor voices in news. All of the submissions included here show great examples of how to demonstrate media literacy, whether it's through video, zines or photography. Each one of the submissions were solicited based on the practice of using Media Literacy as a tool for social change, which is what we put out a call for months ago across the country.

Now, maybe it seems evident that Media Literacy should be taught and practiced for the benefit of social change, but too often that is not the case. Media Literacy has often been presented as a neutral, dispassionate educational methodology, particularly by people in the media industry like Disney and cable companies. For me, Jeff, as someone who comes out of a community organizing background, Media Literacy is just another tool in being an effective organizer for social change. In fact, it is a powerful tool since it allows you to approach any issue and say “how does the media represent this?” So, I can use Media Literacy in talking about sexual assault prevention, labor issues, racial justice, violence, health issues and foreign policy. It is such an all encompassing tool



for social change that I tell people in our media workshops that if you are not taking media seriously in your efforts then you will not be nearly as effective as you could be no matter what issues you are working on.

Frequently in PEG access centers, training provided to aspiring media makers focuses on simply the technical act of making media. I believe (that's me, Belinda) that access training is failing our communities by not teaching the critical thinking skills implicit in the definition of media literacy – the ability to critically consume and create media. A media literate access producer will do so much more for their causes, community, and access center if you can help them to develop these skills.

Today, the Alliance for Community Media is rallying the field to mobilize in the struggle to protect the public interest as legislation is introduced that will give a few powerful corporations complete control over the information passing into and out of every home in America. Media literacy is a powerful tool in the struggle, and one that will engage others who may not otherwise move to action. We hope this edition of Community Media Review will give you ideas on how to begin using media literacy for social change in your own organization. **cMr**

Belinda Rawlins is the General Manager of KZYX&Z, Mendocino County Public Broadcasting, and the former Executive Director of the New Mexico Media Literacy Project, one of the most successful grassroots media literacy organization in the nation. Previously, she was Executive Director of Media Bridges Cincinnati, a community media education center that operated four cable channels, an Internet radio station, and public access Internet. Her background in community media activism spans 20 years at both the national and local level, including involvement with the Alliance for Community Media, the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, the Ohio Community Computing Network, Community Access to Technology, and WAIF 88.3FM community radio.

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Jeff Smith is Director of the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (www.griid.org). For 7 years GRIID has monitored & published reports on the local news media; taught media education throughout the community and used media analysis as an organizing tool; has developed some of its own media literacy curriculum; provides an online local media directory, a lending library of books & videos, and the Progressive Directory of West Michigan – a resource for regional social change groups.

Jeff can be reached at jsmith@grcmc.org

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How MemeFILMS Merges Media Education and Video Production ... and How You Can, too!

Who is MemeFILMS?

As a media literacy educator, **Dr. Rob Williams** works extensively with young people in and out of classroom. Director/cameraman/producer **James Valastro** brings more than sixteen years of camera, lighting, and filmmaking experience to his production work, from concept to completion.

For more MemeFILMS information, visit www.MemeFILMS.org

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meme *n.*

a tiny bit of information – a word, an image, a phrase, a logo
– transmitted virally through media channels...

by Rob Williams, Ph.D.

HERE'S A PUZZLE FOR YOU ... Imagine walking into a classroom full of the latest video production gear: Mac G4 laptop with a 200 gig external drive, a three-chip professional camera and monitor, LCD projector, stage lights, boom poles, and shotgun and wireless microphones to match. Even better — this same room is full of young people, and they, in turn, are full of energy, creativity, and ideas. Some of these kids like to act, others are writers, while still others are interested in all things technical. Most of them like to laugh, and all of them love media: music, movies, video games, magazines and the like. You have a whole day, or one morning, or maybe only an hour, to make movies with this group, using only the gear, talent and time you have available.

Now what do you do?

This is a familiar challenge for all of us who make media with children and teens. Questions abound. How to render order out of chaos? How to channel our kids' fabulous ideas in workable directions with the limited time and money at our disposal? How can we use media to teach about media? How can we make a movie that is actually watch-able (and isn't about skate-boarding?)

Now, step back for a moment. As anyone who hangs out with American kids will tell you, our children are growing up in the most media-saturated society in world history. In many ways, this is exciting news, as podcasting, web blogs, IM'ing, e-gaming, and digital video production offer unprecedented opportunities for kids to express themselves and tell

their own stories.

The flip side, of course, is more ominous — a handful of multinational media conglomerates own the companies and outlets that produce and distribute most of our media content targeted at children. And make no mistake — I use the word "target" deliberately. Each week, American kids spend more money on more stuff than any other single consumer group, and corporate advertisers and brand marketers work ceaselessly to influence children's youthful consumer tastes, build their budding brand loyalties (often around sugar, soda, alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive products), and separate them from their money.

As a result, our children are influenced by a diet of as many as 3,000 discrete corporate commercial messages daily via the Internet, television, video games, mass magazines, and other forms of corporately-owned media that shape "popular" youth culture. While young people impress adults with their "tech-savvy" skills (many parents I know let their kids program their iPods), our children often don't fully appreciate media's power to shape their thinking and behavior, especially with regard to the consumer-based, civic-minded, and health-related choices that accompany childhood and adolescence.

This paradoxical situation poses an important challenge for all of us who work with community media and young people. As our children grow up in the world's most mediated society, how can we as educators and independent media produc-

ers nudge our kids to become more critical media consumers, more active media makers and more engaged citizens?

HERE IN VERMONT, MemeFILMS has been experimenting with this question for more than three years. I first met veteran videographer James Valastro in 2001, as a media educator new to Vermont interested in learning more about digital video production. As we “talked story” — about media, raising our kids, and our common interest in making movies — James expressed a concern I’ve heard from so many 21st century parents: how does anyone raise children to truly appreciate media’s power in the midst of such a rapidly changing and corporately-controlled media culture?

After putting our heads together, we created MemeFILMS to work together — mixing together media literacy education (teaching individuals how to better access, analyze and evaluate media) and digital video production — and then began building working relationships with schools and nonprofits whose media-related interests overlapped our own. During the past three years, we’ve partnered with a wide variety of organizations around the state, from individual K-12 public school classrooms to the state Department of Health. We’ve also worked within a variety of time constraints, too, from “1 shot” forty-minute classes (yes, you can make some good media in a short period of time) to week-long summer camps.

We’ve not made any money doing this, as our work is mostly funded by small grants from struggling schools and nonprofits. But while our means are modest, our goals are ambitious. What we seek is to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to understand important media-related consumer, civic, and health issues — tobacco and alcohol target marketing, body image/self-esteem issues, voting and citizen participation, to name but three — that directly impact their lives. We also seek to give kids the chance to co-create media with us — as actors, writers, directors, producers, and editors.

In making and distributing digital

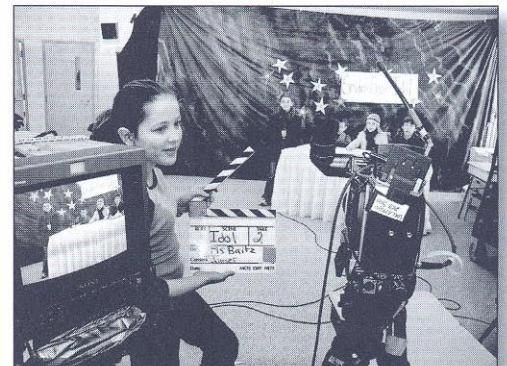
video that both entertains and educates, MemeFILMS focuses on both the educational “process” — how media are “constructed” and how we can understand the many ways media influence us — and the media “product,” designing high-quality digital video that holds viewers’ attention and interest. In this way, MemeFILMS tries to create media that benefits its creators (the young people and the schools with whom we work) and also can be distributed through larger networks — community cable TV networks, statewide nonprofit networks, the Internet, and “world premieres” at local movie theaters.

Before we start shooting video, we begin with media education (visit the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME)’s web site at www.acmecoalition.org to access more media education information and resources). Teaching young people to have fun asking critical questions about existing media is an important first step in engaging kids in the need for and importance of creating their own independent stories. A Super Bowl 2005 movie trailer for Adam Sandler and Chris Rock’s film *The Longest Yard*, for example, becomes a lesson in editing, camera angles, and FX (as well as other production techniques). The trailer doubles as a vehicle for exploring stylized comedic violence and Hollywood pimping for tobacco industry product placement (both prevalent themes in corporate commercial media culture).

Once we explore some popular texts and basic questions with kids, we move on to brainstorming ideas for our own projects. As filmmakers, we walk into every class with our own ideas, and encourage our students to share theirs. Often, a good project grows out of the dialogue we have with students. And, like life, every MemeFILMS’ working arrangement and experience evolves differently, as the rules of engagement are never exactly the same.

The most important thing, though, is to get kids thinking and involved; first,

“We seek to give kids the chance to co-create media with us — as actors, writers, directors, producers, and editors.”



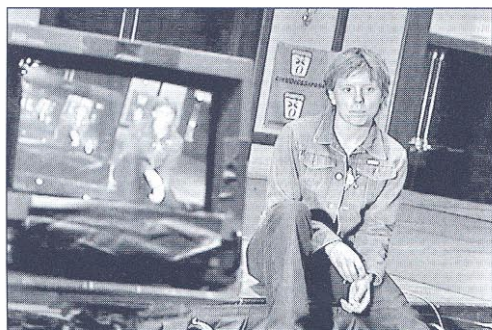
MemeFILMS set design with our 6th grade First Assistant Director

“One of our earliest and most successful prototypes, called ‘The Rant,’ featured a young woman walking and talking about how the tobacco industry uses media to target kids.”

by getting them to think more critically about media, and then, by channeling their thinking into the creation of entertaining video projects that educate how media work on us. Sometimes, kids will do the shooting, while we assist. Other times, we’ll do the primary shooting, with kids assisting as boom operators, cable wranglers, A.D.s, and, of course, doing much of the writing and all of acting.

In addition to teaching the basics of video production (camera work, lighting, sound, etc.) we follow three cardinal rules for video production, making MemeFILMS that are:

1. **Short:** We keep most of our projects short. (30 seconds to 3 minutes seems an ideal length). Like many of us, kids dream big, but then get frustrated when they can’t execute their ideas. We start by limiting the time length of any MemeFILMS project. This eliminates a ton of needless energy expended on unworkable ideas that are simply impossible to film with the amount of time and money available.



MemeFILMS filming high school voices at a statewide leadership summit

2. **Simple:** We strive to keep all of our concepts simple. Squeeze as much as you can, for example, out of a single statistic (Here are two: teens see as many as 3,000 ad messages a day, while six Big Media corporations own as much as 90% of children’s media content). Challenge kids to do a lot with a little. This also makes editing a snap — do most of your (pre) production work on site, rather than in the editing room (unless you have the time and money to spend on editing programs like iMovie, Final Cut, or Avid).

3. **Sophisticated:** We don’t need a billion dollar budget to create media that is “layered” and inter-

esting to watch. We use camera angles and motion, ambient noise and special sounds, whip pans, lighting, simple FX, funky settings (bathrooms are always fun) to hold a viewer’s attention. And showing students how to play with “audience attention” gets them excited about coming up with easy and creative ways to tell the story.

Instead of using storyboards (blasphemy in many production circles, I know), we’ve bottled a number of MemeFILMS “prototypes” — simple field-tested formulas that offer kids various ways to conceptualize and structure their projects — and we’ve made these prototypes available in both text and video formats. One of our earliest and most successful prototypes, called “The Rant,” featured a young woman walking and talking about how the tobacco industry uses media to target kids. (You can use “The Rant” prototype with kids to tackle ANY topic of interest to them). Another early experiment led to the “The Appeal,” featuring a young man, framed by patriotic bunting on a baseball diamond, talking directly to tobacco industry executives and asking them to “please stop targeting us.” Kids’ voices are more powerful than they (and we) realize. Having students talk directly to parents, or corporate executives, or advertisers is empowering, and makes for powerful media, too.

HOW DO WE DISTRIBUTE OUR FILMS? Any way we can. I use our Memes in both DVD and QuickTime movie formats to educate kids in the media literacy education workshops and keynotes I give all over the country. Many of our MemeFILMS are aired on Vermont’s community cable TV outlets; we’ve even had PEG producers compress our videos for hosting at their web sites! (Kids like this, because then they can call friends and relatives and share the URL link — movie stars in cyberspace!) We also use MemeFILMS video experiences to create entire “awards shows” for school auditoriums full of kids. This past winter, we designed an entire “Oscars”-type awards assembly — “Butts of Holly-

wood” — for a local high school, featuring student MCs and a “live via satellite” feel. Eight Hundred kids attended the assembly, had fun, laughed a bunch, and learned how tobacco corporations use Hollywood product placement to increase kids’ interest in smoking — a “win win” for everyone (except the Marlboro guys).

Our favorite method of distribution involves creating a “world premiere” movie event of our student films, either (ideally) in a local movie theater or a big screen auditorium, and inviting local TV news crews, school and select board members, parents, state politicians and health officials to attend. Plenty of publicity — including posters and press releases to local and state media outlets and phone calls to key community leaders — helps ensure a big turnout. Our youth film-makers dress up and walk down the red carpet, bathed in bright lights and camera flash “pops” from the crowd, followed by a community screening of our films and a “meet and greet” with food and drink afterwards. This is a fine way to honor students’ work, and educate parents and entire communities about the important relationship between media education and video production.

You can get a taste for MemeFILMS’ prototypes at our web site, and we’ve also packaged them on DVDs for easy and affordable access. Here are four different ways you can use the MemeFILMS prototypes to enhance your own media education and video production work.

1. **Educational tools:** Explore the Meme prototypes, in conjunction with ACME’s “Questioning Media” principles, to teach the basics of media literacy education, including: the general principles of media education, methods for media analysis/ deconstruction, product placement, focus group testing, and basic facts that illustrate how our media culture works.

2. **Production prototypes:** Explore the Meme prototypes, in conjunction with Meme’s web-driven production notes, to teach the basics of video production: camera motion, field sound, SPFX, lighting, blocking, script-writing, acting and directing.
3. **Examples of youth activism:** Share MemeFILMS prototypes (many of which have aired all over Vermont on community cable television and in movie theaters) to illustrate young people having fun challenging the media status quo.
4. **Entertaining movies:** Show MemeFILMS prototypes to remind kids that making media can be exciting, rewarding, and fun!

Consider that the most memorable media — TV commercials, movie trailers and the like — are very simple... In the end, the MemeFILMS formula is also very simple. What we do is to combine truth, humor, honesty, and the voices of our youth with accessible but powerful video production methods. We make Memes in very short time frames, design them for editing ease, and use them to impact whole communities.

Ultimately, the most fascinating aspect of our work has been the wonderful sense of spontaneous experimentation that results when you give communities permission to play with video. Making and distributing media that matters in minutes is essential work for all of us seeking a more democratic and humane media culture.

And, it’s heaps of fun, too!

“How do we distribute our films? Any way we can. I use our Memes in both DVD and QuickTime movie formats to educate kids in the media literacy education workshops and keynotes I give all over the country.”



MemeFILMS’ James Valastro and Vermont 6th graders with their smoke-free trophies: Flushing Big Tobacco

CMR

The Radical Education Roadshow

by Anne Elizabeth Moore

About the Author

Anne Elizabeth Moore is the author of *Hey Kidz, Buy This Book: A Radical Primer on Corporate and Governmental Propaganda and Artistic activism for Short People*, the editor of the new annual Best American Comics series for Houghton Mifflin, and the associate publisher and co-editor of Punk Planet. She lives in Chicago.

Anne can be reached at aem@anneelizabethmoore.com

DID ANYBODY CATCH THE RECENT *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* when they renovated the home of that soldier stationed in Iraq? Not only did they make the house over *extremely*, they sent the whole family off to Disneyland, and while they were gone the show *arranged for the enlisted father to be shipped home courtesy ABC/Disney*. Then, they erected the flag, built a baseball diamond in the backyard and, finally, the Brooklyn Dodgers brought Tommy Lasorda over so everyone could play whiffleball. The kids, the reunited parents, the show's hosts, the Brooklyn Dodgers, and even viewers at home got misty-eyed as we, together, pondered the wondrous spread of American-style freedom to other lands, courtesy ABC, Disney, and the fine people in charge over there at the US government.

It was exactly this sort of transparent patriotism I had in mind when I devised the *Radical Education Roadshow* in summer of 2004, a nationwide, variable curriculum, traveling corps of independent media makers who would provide hands-on workshops and give readings to kids and young adults on making their own media. (I had just released *Hey Kidz, Buy This Book: A Radical Primer on Corporate and Governmental Propaganda and Artistic Activism for Short People*, an intro-to-media text for young adults; the workshops on the tour were based on curricula developed in the book.) Such blatant propaganda, I felt, could be spotted by a child, if only the child knew to look for it. That was the purpose of the Roadshow: to point out the propaganda that sneaks into kids' lives and give them the means to fight it.

Most of the workshops focused on zine-making. It is easy to complete an entire publication in a three-hour period — the length of each of our sessions — but also, I'd like to think, print media hold sway over youth. Additionally, there's an accessibility to print — the tactility everyone sudden-

ly starts revering when we talk about all books going digital one of these days.

In a three-hour period, we were usually able to discuss, create, and disseminate an 8 1/2" x 11" 8-up zine, which we'd start by unfolding *How To Make This Very Zine* (figure 1) and folding it back together again. (Unfortunately, I can't enclose a folded copy of it for you to figure out but the pictures are pretty clear and you should be able to figure it out.) Universally, the zines were brilliant, a fact which became most clear during the final and vital distribution phase of the project.

The three-hour session was divided up into six equally important elements of publishing. These were described in a half-hour introductory period during which I talked a little bit about my two decades of experience in the publishing industry — starting when I was 15. The six sessions, outlined below, are also printed in *How To Make This Very Zine*. (In terms of my copyright over this zine, I don't mind if you photocopy it as long as you use it in its entirety. Additionally, the curriculae described in this essay are available for your use, as long as I am credited when quoted directly. While I'm dedicated to disseminating information — as much for free as possible — it's only fair to credit the author. If you'd like to do something to support me in exchange, buy a copy of *Hey Kidz* for your library.)

1. **Develop your concept:** Keep your resources, audience, and end product in mind!
2. **Solicit your contributions:** Remember your time limit!
3. **Edit your contributions:** Throw away *all* garbage!
4. **Illustrate contributions:** Make it all look good and make sense!

by anne elizabeth moore

HOW TO MAKE THIS ZINE

THIS VERY ZINE

WAS CREATED FOR THE
RADICAL EDUCATION
ROADSHOW

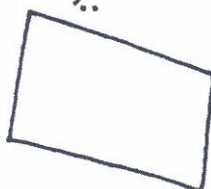
BY
ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

GET THE BOOK HEY KIDZ!
BUY THIS BOOK OR VISIT
www.heykidz.org

THEN FOLD IT OVER AGAIN...



AND FOLD IT HAMBURGER-STYLE,



TAKE YOUR PAPER:

...SO IT IS ALMOST SQUARE.

THEN FOLD IT AGAIN.

(Soooo, I can't draw that.)



THE "BOTTOM" WILL LOOK LIKE THIS.

NOW UNDO YOUR LAST TWO FOLDS. YOU WILL HAVE A HANKED PIECE OF PAPER WITH FOUR PARTS TO IT.

3 EDIT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS
(THROW AWAY THE GARBAGE!)

4 ILLUSTRATE CONTRIBUTIONS
(MAKE IT ALL LOOK GOOD AND MAKE SENSE!)

5 PRODUCTION
(HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU ALMOST HAVE TO REMEMBER):

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ADS

INDICIA

PAGE NUMBERS

CONTACT INFO

COPYRIGHT INFO

BLOS

DISTRIBUTION INFO

MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION

(PLEASE REMEMBER WHAT THE END, AND HOW GET IT TO PRINT!)

6

NOW YOU ARE READY TO FILL IT WITH BRILLIANCE, OR STUPIDITY! IT DOESN'T MATTER! IT'S YOURS!

ALL OF PUBLISHING CONCERNS 6
MAYBE AREAS. IF YOU MAKE A ZINE YOU THINK ABOUT ALL OF THEM—EVEN IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.

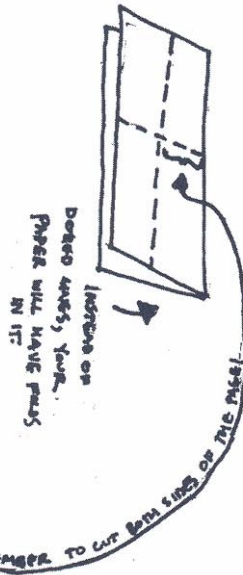
DO THESE IN ORDER, OR NOT! DO THEM IN FRENCH! DO THEM ALL WRONG! WHATEVER YOU WANT!

1 DEVELOP YOUR CONCEPT
(KEEP THE RESPONSES, INSPIRES, AND GO THROUGH IN MIND!)

2 SOLICIT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS
(REMEMBER THE TIME LIMIT!)

THEN UNFOLD YOUR PAPER COMPLETELY. IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE IT IS SQUARED AT YOU.

CUT THE INNERMOST FOLD, HALFWAY ALONG THE PAGE.



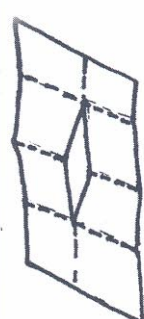
Instead of DOTTED LINES, YOUR PAPER WILL HAVE FOLDS IN IT.

THAT ONE! REMEMBER TO CUT BOTH SIDES OF THE ZONE!

THEN FLATTEN AND FOLD OVER LIKE THE ONE YOU'RE HOLDING NOW.



REFOLD YOUR PAPER HOT-DOG STYLE AND CREASE IT. PUSH IT TOGETHER SO IT LOOKS LIKE THIS:



(IT MIGHT BE...)



cut & here

Figure 1

5. **Production:** Here are some things you might have forgotten:
 - a. Table of contents
 - b. Ads
 - c. Indicia
 - d. Page numbers
 - e. Contact info
 - f. Copyright info
 - g. Bios
 - h. Distribution info

6. **Marketing and distribution:** Make people want your zine, and then get it to them!

that time period. Often, we completed them during the marketing and distribution phase, during which we took turns describing our zines: what they meant, where we got the images, what we liked about them.

Materials were limited to anything already in the room we inhabited. In the art room, for example, we had access to collage and art materials. Sometimes, however, we only had pencils and paper — not even scissors or a photocopier! The point of limiting materials is not only to encourage creativity, but also to make it clear that the creation of media does not require much.

Some of the zines we created over the summer were direct responses to other print media. *Teen Leprechaun*, (figure 2) for example, by the pseudonymous Emerald the Leprechaun, is subtitled (*not to be confused with Teen People*). But the authoress also quickly brings in elements of her own life, berating her friends for having missed a play she'd starred in the previous weekend (figure 3).

Part of the trick with this workshop was our extremely limited time frame: it was challenging, but also invigorating. With only, really, an hour to actually work on the contents of the zine — the other two hours were divided fairly evenly between preparing for and then photocopying the zine — the participants were forced to work on instinct, and work fast. There was little time for second-guessing and self-consciousness. (Not that most of the kids I ended up working with had any anyway).

So even the zines that had little direct media literacy components often displayed the degree to which youth

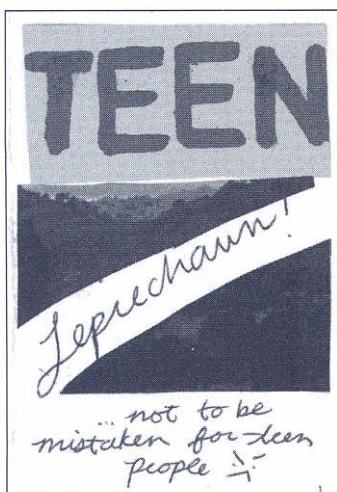


Figure 2

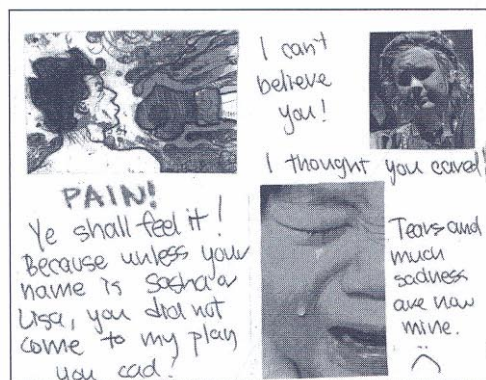


Figure 3

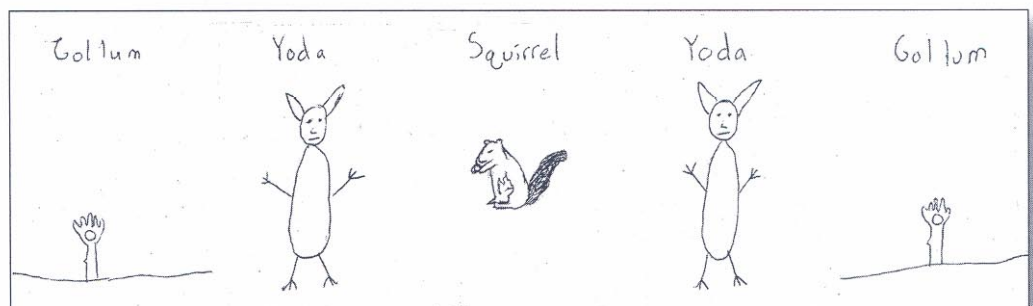


Figure 4

are immersed in the media environment. Possibly my favorite zine ever, of any zines I have ever seen in my twelve years of making and reading them, *Gollum/Yoda/Squirrel/Yoda/Gollum* (figure 4), by the amazing and talented Zach Bosen, simply displays a list of things the author clearly liked — despite that, he claims, he's incapable of drawing them (he had a friend draw the squirrel and didn't bother drawing more than the most recognizable part of Gollum. That two of the three characters are from extremely popular and well-advertised films doesn't strike Zach as odd — and it shouldn't. They are as much a part of his life as the Squirrel. But he's made them into his own creations, recontextualized them to suit his own needs.

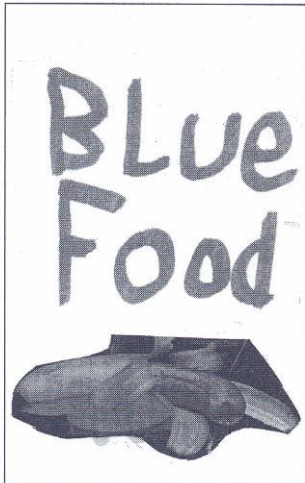


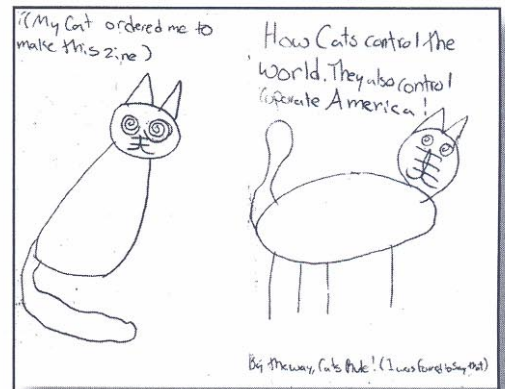
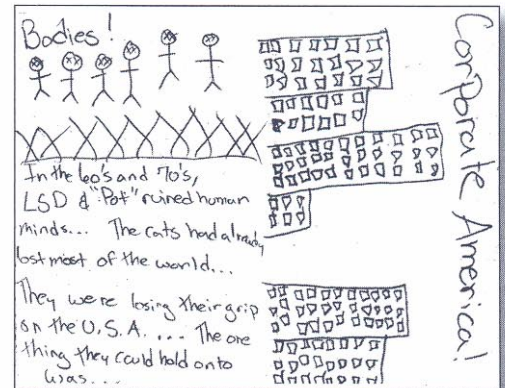
Figure 5

Similarly, *Blue Food* — the author of which preferred to remain totally anonymous — simply took images from advertising and made them weird and blue (figure 5). Blue food, of course, is the most popular forbidden food by parents throughout the states. That the author's turned every conceivable type of food blue shouldn't go unappreciated.

Cats Control the World: They Also Control Corporate America was a brilliant zine made in direct response to one made by one of my co-presenters, Jason Kucsma of *Clamor* and the *Zine Year Book*. Jason's zine, *Why Dogs Should Rule the World*, was filled with pictures of dogs and a sequential listing of all the things that would make them great world

leaders. *Cats Control the World*, however, pushed the joke even further, proving that, in fact, cats already did control the world — they even controlled the author of the zine that claimed so, Elizabeth Tan (figures 6 and 7).

NOW, ALL OF THE ZINES chosen for this description of the Radical Education Roadshow were created in Puyallup Washington, where the young adult librarian Lisa Oldoski (figure 8) has been invigorating the community there for several years. Her zine, *You Don't Look Like a Librarian*, describes what is possibly the most important component to developing a working model for full media literacy: an engaged resource. Lisa the librarian is only one of several librarians dedicated to youth media literacy throughout the US. They are doing the groundwork in fighting the structures behind the blatant propaganda like that found on *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. You don't have to look very hard to find them, but I'd urge you to work hard to support them. **CMR**



Figures 6 & 7

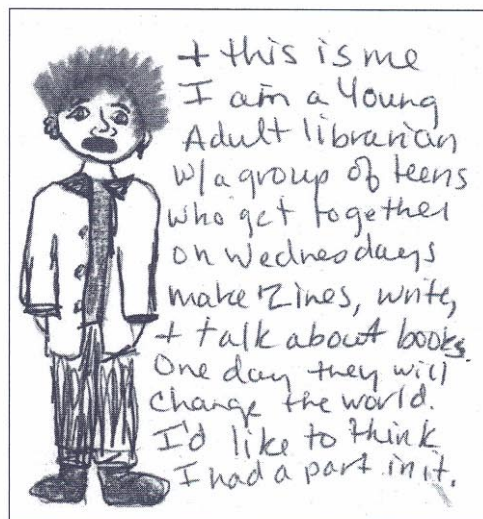


Figure 8

In Her Image: Producing Womanhood in America

by Julia Barry

About the Author

Julia Barry is the creator, musician, and director of the experimental advocacy program, *In Her Image: Producing Womanhood in America*. She works with high schools, colleges, community centers, and conferences to promote widespread, public media literacy and has received the Andrea Klein Willison Prize for Poetry/Women's Activism.

For more information on *In Her Image*, please visit juliabarry.com/inherimage or feel free to contact Julia at 617.549.5925 or InHerImage@juliabarry.com.



WE ARE CONSTANTLY BOMBARDED with images and messages representing and shaping American life. What are their roots and meanings? How do they affect society's views of gender? How do they influence life perceptions and experiences?

As the MTV generation matures and the nation becomes increasingly accustomed to commercial presence, media impact is actually expanding — but most Americans want to think less and less about it, tired of circular discussions on gender equality and media sway.

In an era where profit industries help to set and reinforce social paradigms that are paradoxical but powerful, life can be a struggle between impossible-to-meet roles, especially for women (sexpot, mother, career-woman).

Plastic surgery and Hormone Replacement Therapy (the prior “cure” for menopause which now is shown to cause cancer) stand in league with wrinkle creams, diet plans, cigarettes and alcohol, exercise, yoga, anti-depression medications, tampons, makeup, birth control, and bras as products that must be purchased for the “healthy” female lifestyle.

While BabyGap pushes sexiness early with leopard-print shoes for infants, the Department of Health promotes abstinence as a cure for teenage pregnancy; while music videos propose the ultimate fantasy of submissive women, more than 100,000 rapes are reported to the FBI each year, most of which are under-treated by emergency rooms; while most Americans attribute their diets and exercise routines to health objectives against a growing obesity panic, how-to-lap-dance exercise videos, pro-anorexia websites, and the popularity of cheap fast food tell us more complex stories.

Large-scale social change efforts such as gay rights activism, ethnic pride, and

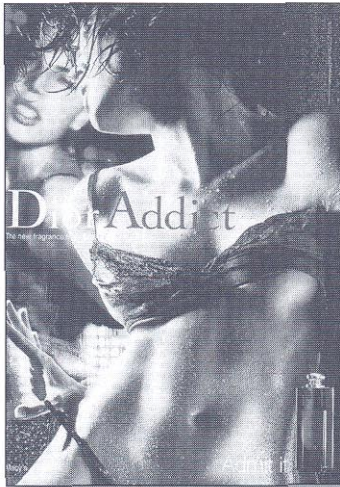
breast cancer awareness, or corporate-sponsored efforts such as Dove's “Campaign for Real Beauty,” ironically lead to a higher focus on looks, individual differences, and heterosexual standards. In addition, government cut-backs to health benefits, women's reproductive rights, welfare and housing programs, and education and arts funding only add to America's dog-eat-dog mentality sent up by the fantasy of the American dream.

LET ME BACK UP and introduce myself. My name is Julia Barry; I am a media literacy educator. While this view of society may seem like an endless negative cycle, I believe that we can gain rights and individual happiness with knowledge, purpose, and a sense of togetherness, engaging in programs that promote peace, understanding, and equality between human beings. In this spirit of communication and individual responsibility, I created a public awareness program entitled *In Her Image: Producing Womanhood in America* for use by people like you. While I am only one person and cannot possibly provide magic-bullet solutions to America's most complicated social issues, I do



believe in the power of interdisciplinary learning and discussion to make change, and am sharing *In Her Image* with as many people as I can, because together we can make change.

In Her Image: Producing Womanhood in America is an experiential program and curriculum that addresses the influence of media imagery in American society through a female perspective.



Available as a live performance or film accompanied by supplemental materials for discussion and action, *In Her Image* is a 34-minute audio-visual documentation of advertisements, photographs, illustrations, and pertinent text taken from public sources such as the internet, textbooks, magazines, health brochures, and billboards. These images are arranged in order of the human lifespan and examine gender norms and the issues they affect — sex/sexuality, teenage pregnancy, pornography, reproductive rights, marriage, family, career, body image/eating

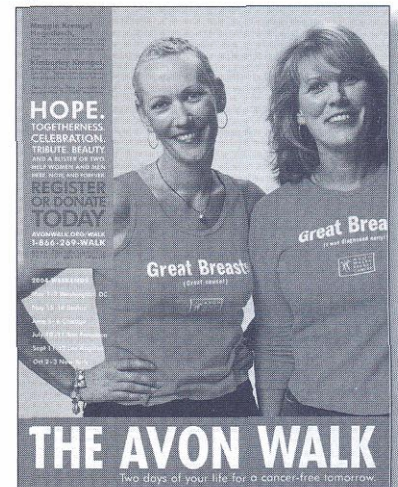


disorders, nutrition and diet, drugs and alcohol, violence/abuse and harassment, discrimination, and aging — by tracing back to the sources that influence them. In rearranging the obvious, *In Her Image* refreshes the investigation of gender dynamics in the United States today.

While the program is organized to question how commercial images represent and shape daily life, it does not dictate pre-processed conclusions to audiences; rather, *In Her Image* utilizes images, text, and song — the usual methods of communication found in magazines, print advertisements, movies, and TV — allowing audience-members to recognize and access the collected content. Viewers experience these images condensed within one presentation, therefore gaining consciousness about the high volume of messages they internalize every day. The program's underlying musical element involves audiences directly, resonating for a greater impact than conventional methods of education which employ only the spoken or written word.

Through use with a wide range of public audiences, *In Her Image* inspires discussion, understanding, and action about the consequences of living in a media-saturated society where man-made images — that Americans might feel immune to — portray and shape everyday life. *In Her Image* promotes individual confidence and plural unity, encouraging Americans to become critical consumers and advocates for a fairer, happier society not dictated by commercial interests and pressures.

For more information, please visit <http://juliabarry.com/inherimage> or feel free to contact me at 617.549.5925 or InHerImage@juliabarry.com.



Thank you for participating. cMr

Playing Dead

by Shannon Petrello

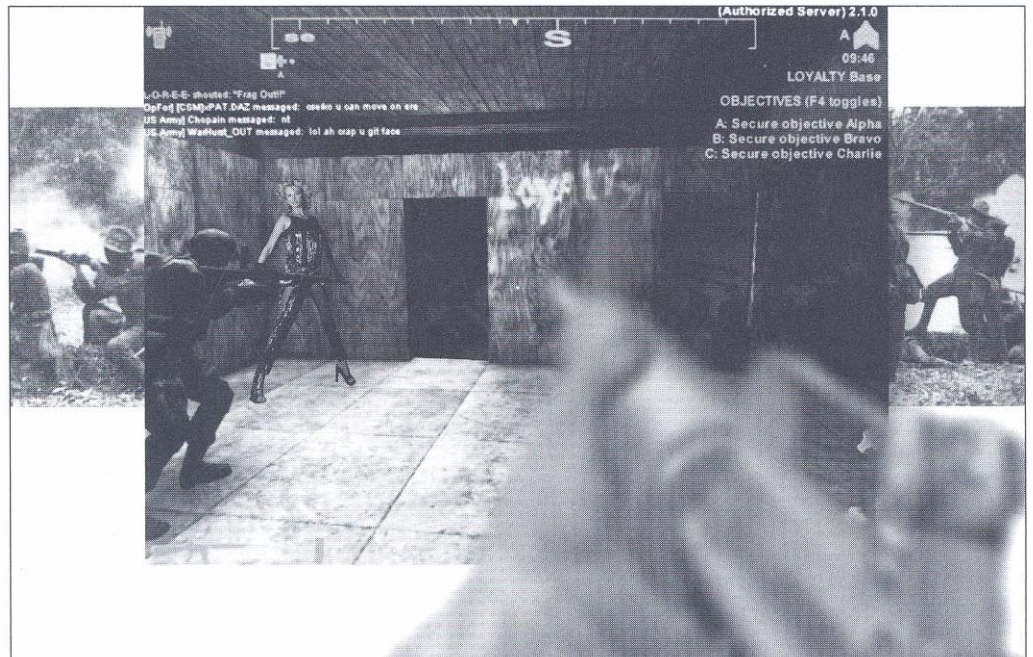
About the Artist

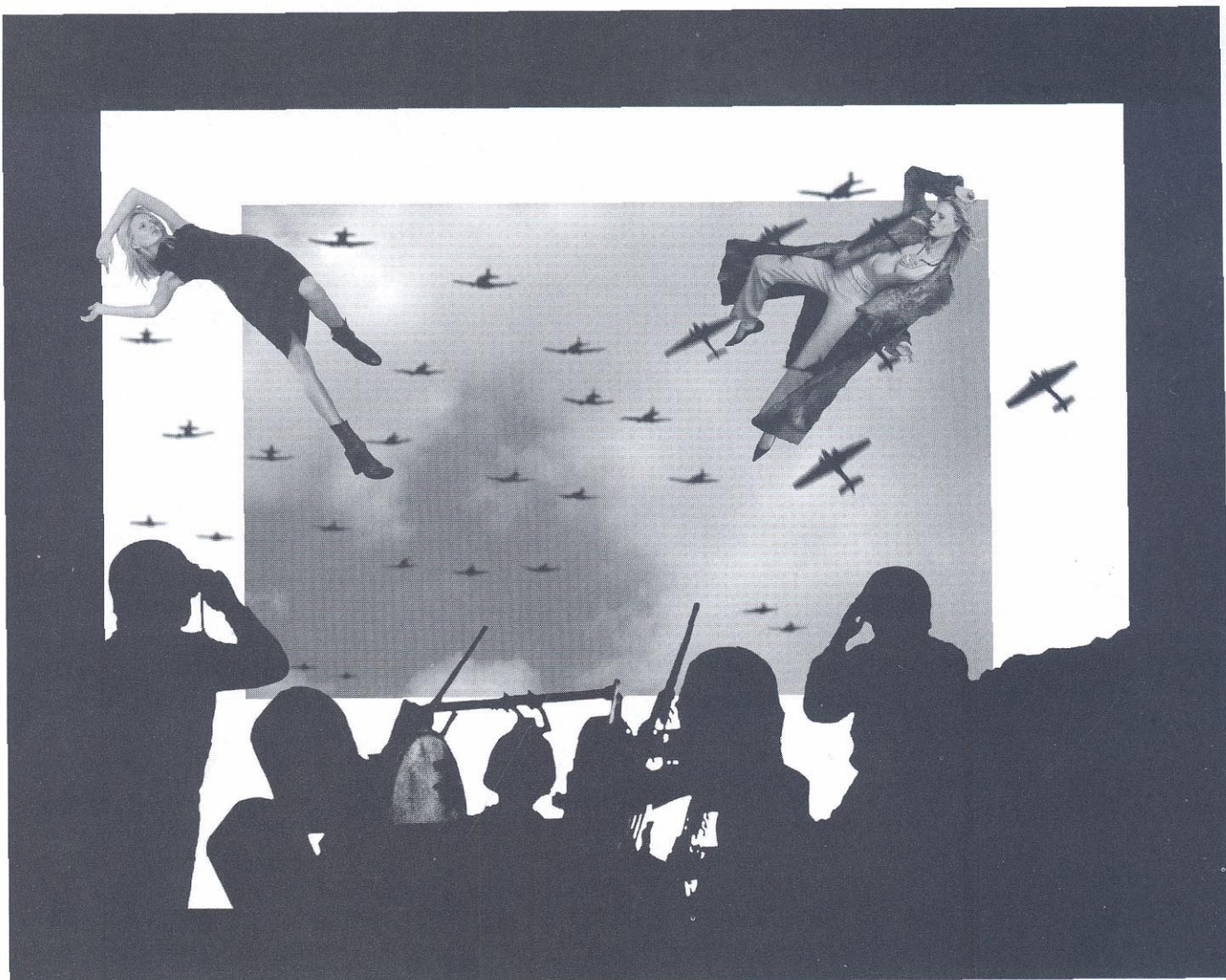
Shannon Petrello is a multi-media artist living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Shannon can be reached at spetrello@hotmail.com

Playing Dead is a series of digital collages composed of appropriate iconic images of gender. This series originally began as two separate projects: one which explored consumer culture images of women in which their victimization or death was implied, and one which explored the transformation of war into a game as it is marketed to men.

Slowly, these projects began to merge, and it was startling to see how easily the two sets of images meshed together, despite their distances in time and space. Through the juxtaposition and interrelation of fashion models, military video games, and soldiers from wars past, *Playing Dead* asks how men and women relate to each other in this culture. How do our roles symbiotically play off and need each other to complete the ongoing narrative of war in our society? **CMR**





According to statistics posted by the National Institute on Media and the Family:

By age 13, 53% of American girls are unhappy with their bodies.

By age 17, the percentage grows to 78%.

Most 10 year old boys and girls both said they were dissatisfied with their own bodies after watching a video by Britney Spears.

According to Current Health (January 2005), more than 300,000 teens age 18 or younger had some sort of cosmetic work done in 2004.

A few places to find media literacy lessons about body image:

The **Media Awareness Network** has a growing "Lesson Library" in their For Teachers section.

www.media-awareness.ca

Advocates for Youth provides a wide array of lesson plans to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their health.

www.advocatesforyouth.org

New Mexico Media Literacy Project creates and distributes multimedia educational resources with an emphasis on activism, many of which are health focused.

<http://nmmlp.org>

The Cinema of Power Relationships: Low Tech, High Concept

by Tom Zaniello

About the Author

Tom Zaniello is the Director of the Honors Program at Northern Kentucky University, and author of *Working Stiffs*, *Union Maids*, *Reds*, and *Riffraff*.

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FINDING AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY for teaching film within the context of organizing for social change or at the very least for increased public awareness of social issues requires a simple, portable, and flexible methodology which recognizes and builds on an audience's knowledge. Teaching a film studies course to union organizers, administrators, and staff at the National Labor College (AFL CIO's nationally accredited, adult learner completion college) has a special set of challenges.

The students start with significant life experiences and expertise in union and working class issues, not to mention a firm grasp of the power relationships that inform their life's work. But they nonetheless consume the mainstream media's negative images of labor, caricatures of union organizers, and incomplete analyses of corporate entitlement. For example, it is difficult for them to escape the powerful images of Wal-Mart, the world's largest employer, which remains virtually union-free. Only rarely do we learn that the company of \$8.50/hour workers (almost none full time) support a CEO who earns \$30 million a year and provides five of founder Sam Walton's heirs with \$20 billion each.

Therefore I structure my course, *Images of Labor in Film*, on the recognition that working people, their unions, and working class political movements have always been a part of Hollywood, independent and foreign filmmaking. While some of the most popular films about labor have presented their subjects in an unfavorable light, lesser-known titles with more balanced or even positive views go unseen and unnoticed. Yet, because we live in a culture that receives so much of its information and ultimately derives many of its opinions from visual media, it is especially important to see, to understand, and

to study more than the usual selection of mainstream media images.

I screen an extremely broad spectrum of films, ranging from agit-prop documentaries made by union or political activists to Hollywood features. In between, we watch different types of films, such as traditional documentaries, classic TV exposés, and experimental or post-modern films.

And although the students, like most adults, have seen untold numbers of TV shows and commercial films, very rarely have they used any cinematic analysis or interpreted how films represent power relationships in our society.

The assignment I use successfully builds on their knowledge of power relationships to develop their technical ability to interpret media. The exercise I call *The Cinema of Power Relationships* involves the application of three lists of different terms (see *Figure 1*).

After viewing a film, I divide students into groups and assign a major section or related set of sequences. I hand out a handful of different colored magic markers and sheets of flipchart paper, and ask students to create a visual image which renders the relationships of power depicted in the film. Each part of the image must be explained cinematically, and show how the film develops its issues, and clarify how the issues themselves are represented (see *Figure 2*).

Usually we have time to illustrate one or two major sequences. We find that a successful drawing of a limited number of sequences points to the direction of the film overall. By charting one shot or sequence we can bring other related shots and sequences into play. **cMr**

Corporate Point of View	Workers Point of View	Cinematic Point of View
Consultants	Bargaining	Archival footage
Corporate site	Community	Close-up
Lawyers	Consumers	Interview
Managers	International union	Lighting
Police	Local union	Live action
Politicians	Organizing	Music
Supervisors	Strike	Photo stills
	Work site (factory, etc.)	Slow motion Titles Voice-over narrator
(Students may add other terms as necessary to any of the lists.)		

Figure 1

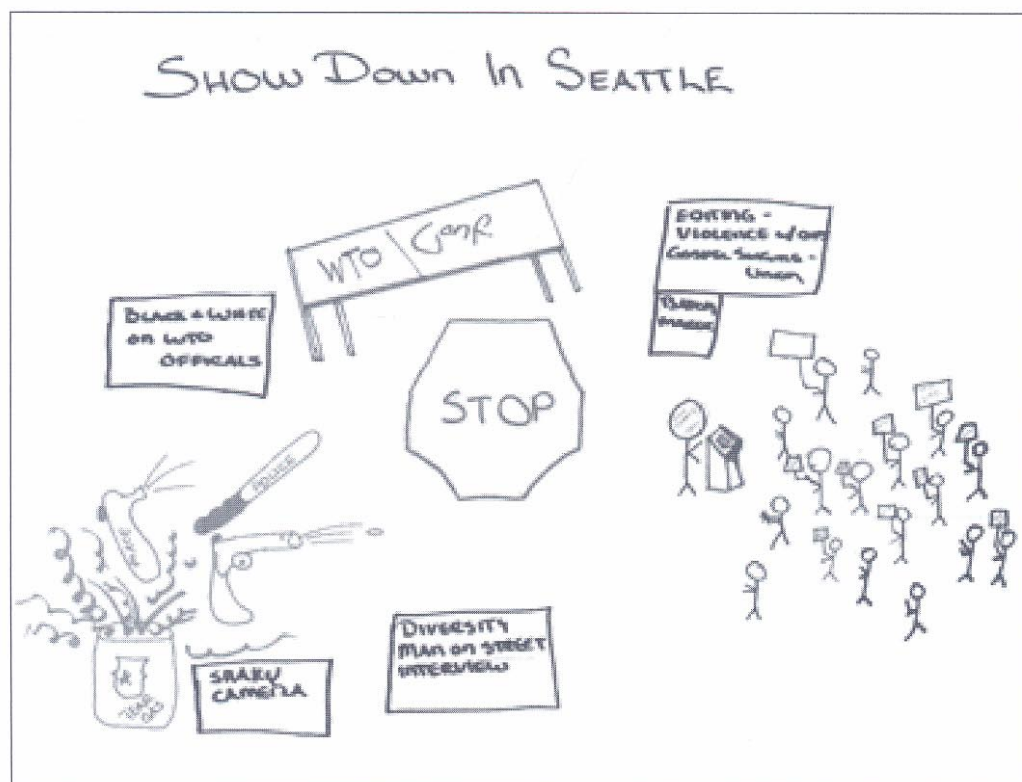


Figure 2

The diagram above illustrates PART II, "PEOPLE UNITE, POLICE RIOT" of "SHOW-DOWN IN SEATTLE," an agit-prop documentary of five 30-minute programs created by a number of independent videographers who covered the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) demonstrations and satellite-cast their pooled and edited footage immediately after the events depicted. The sequences viewed for this exercise included (1) demonstrators attacked by the police in the daytime intercut with (2) an interview with a carpenter who explains how he hand crafts perfect police batons for crowd control and (3) rallies with speakers from unions, community groups, and international organizations followed by (4) night sequences of what seem to be anarchists and other street-fighting cells amidst police tear gas barrages. This illustration was created by National Labor College students Jennifer Madsen, Deanna Dunton, and Fentre Graves-Neal.

Films About Labor

This short list is just a sample of films about labor available to educators. A quick internet search will help you find more.

— eds.

Open The Road To The Women Fighters (Paso a Las Luchadoras)

Argentine women declare that their oppression is created by the capitalist social system, and manifested by a lack of jobs, domestic and institutional violence and in the lack of freedom to govern one's own body

Shots on The Docks

A short film about the Police riot and repression of a peaceful Anti-war protest and picket at the port of Oakland on April 7th, 2003

Friend or Foe

Documents the struggle of Korean Telecommunications workers imposed by globalization.

10,000 Black Men Named George

Docudrama of the life of A. Philip Randolph and his Brotherhood of Sleeping

Car Porters

At The River I Stand

Documents the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers' strike and the historical forces which came together with the death of Dr. Martin Luther King

The Big One

Armed with a camera and a sharp sense of humor, Michael Moore asks why companies are laying off workers while reaping huge profits.

Business as Usual

Glenda Jackson and John Thaw star in this story of a union's reaction to sexual harassment in a Liverpool dress shop.

Granito de Arena

The story of a grassroots, non-violent movement of public schoolteachers who endured brutal repression in their 25-year struggle to defend public education in Mexico.

Live Nude Girls Unite!

Follows the quest of dancers at the Lusty Lady Club to form the first ever Exotic Dancers Union.

Seventh Graders Talk Back ... In a Good Way!

Media Literacy Lessons Motivate

by *Claudia Crase*

About the Author

Claudia Crase teaches Communication Arts to 7th graders at Helena Middle School in Helena, MT. She conducts professional development in the areas of media literacy, the Six-Traits of Writing, and in the area of asset development. When she is not teaching, she is hiking, knitting, skiing, and hanging out in the "Last Best Place."

Claudia can be reached at ccrase@helena.k12.mt.us

Resources

Bradshaw, Dorothy,
Media Literacy/Social Marketing Lesson Plans (April 2005)

Rideout, Victoria,
Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-Olds,
KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION STUDY (March 2005)

Share, Jeff,
Five Key Questions That Can Change the World: Classroom Activities for Media Literacy
CENTER FOR MEDIA LITERACY (2005)

IN THE SPRING, harnessing the minds and skills of seventh graders can be challenging. Most are thinking about how they look, what's cool, and who's going out with whom. What would capture and hold the attentions of 7th graders better than their peers and where they rank on the cool indicator? TV, ads, and the movies! And a chance to really talk to their community about change. A public health specialist and three teachers in Helena, Montana collaborated to create and implement an engaging four-week media literacy and social marketing unit to introduce students to the basics of media literacy, and then asked kids to talk back to adults in their community, in a good way. This project is an example of the power of school/community partnerships to hand students the tools for critical thinking about media, while giving them a positive voice to affect change in their own town.

The media literacy project was the brainchild of Helena's Youth Connections Coalition, a group of school administrators, teachers, parents, community members and youth who work to create a safer and more caring community that promotes positive skills and healthy development among youth. Dorothy Bradshaw, Lewis and Clark County's Tobacco Use Prevention Specialist, and long-time media literacy advocate, headed the project. Teaming up with Communication Arts teachers was a natural, given that Media Literacy is a strand of the Montana Content Standards for the Communication Arts. Teachers perpetually search for meaningful and motivating projects as vehicles for satisfying content standards. This project met all of the Montana Content Standards for Media Literacy, while also engaging students in meaningful

reading, writing, speaking and listening activities. It also appealed to the developmental needs of adolescents to question, to express individual opinions, and to be of value in their world. This project extended beyond the walls of the classroom into real life, into the real world of work to address real community issues.

The pilot project was designed to address five core concepts of media literacy as set forth by the Center for Media Literacy:

1. All media messages are "constructed."
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are constructed to gain profit and/or power.

In addition to these fundamental understandings, media literacy instruction emphasizes the process skills of awareness, analysis, reflection, and action. Throughout these media lessons, students were encouraged to think critically about media. The lessons and activities in the project were intended to help students learn to analyze information, learn to evaluate the explicit and implicit messages of media, and then to create or express their own media messages across a range of media options.

Need for the project was based on re-

sults gathered from the Montana Prevention Needs Assessment (MPNA) from 2002. According to those MPNA results, 33 percent of 8th grade students surveyed reported that they have attitudes favorable to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. By 12th grade, half of student respondents reported attitudes favorable to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. Just under half of all students surveyed perceived that their families and their community would be tolerant of youth use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Youth in Helena scored significantly higher than the state and national averages in these areas. Youth Connections wanted to impact the perceptions that youth hold that their community is favorable to youth use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

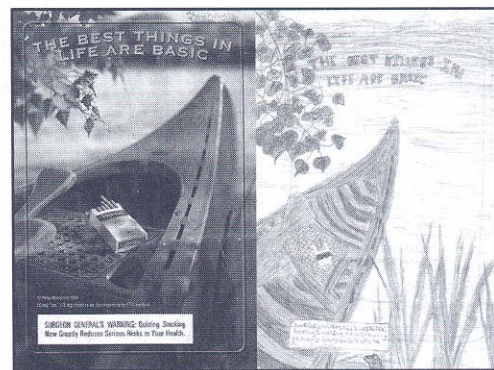
Targeting perceptions is chimerical work. Asking 7th graders to talk honestly to adults about alcohol, tobacco, and drug use is tricky. But not too tricky for media savvy teachers, a resource-rich media consultant, and a subject as motivating as media.

THE PROJECT BEGAN with an introduction to media and media literacy that included a wide range of print, screen, and audio examples. Teachers projected images of logos, and showed advertisements, movie clips and commercials daily, to rave reviews from students. "This is cool," expressed one student. "We need to know what it all means." Teachers presented activities that heightened students' awareness of the level of media saturation in our culture, lessons about product placement using movie clips, and loads of statistics about kids and the media. Students learned how to analyze advertisements and then created ads and counter ads. They learned techniques and tools of persuasion, as well as strategies for marketing to a target audience. Throughout the project, students were asked to reflect on and respond to each day's activities in the form of exit slips. On some days, teachers asked for a reaction to the information presented. On other days, students responded to specific questions. The exit slips allowed students to give feedback on the activities, lessons, and information

presented. Teachers were able to respond to questions, to clarify points, and to gauge students' growing understanding of media concepts and tools. Student responses on exit slips showed evidence of their maturing awareness about media and its effects on their lives. Students were also able to express questions, concerns, and any "ah ha" moments through this format.

Perhaps the most exciting part of the project was the high level of engagement by students. "Lots of conversation and ah-ha moments! The room sizzles with their enthusiasm," I wrote in my daily log in response to students' reactions on the day they analyzed print ads. "J. raised his hand for the first time all year to comment on the content of music lyrics," I noted on another day. Students were highly engaged in the activities. One boy wrote on his exit slip, "Thank you. We need to know this stuff!" Many recognized the value of learning about the hidden messages in advertisements and how media influence us. All three of us noticed that even our most reluctant students who usually struggle to find meaning in what we do in class were hooked by this project. They were eager to share their insights, and to get their ideas out there in discussions. From the first minute, they were "in."

The second phase of the project addressed social marketing. We were excited about the real life opportunity students would have to use what they had learned to develop an effective advertising campaign targeting adults in Helena. We found out quickly, however, that pitching the social marketing portion of the project to students was awkward. Middle school kids have highly sensitive radar to being told by adults how *they* need to change. They already feel that adults tell them what to do and not to do far too often. Helena kids are no different. Because we did not want youth to feel we were trying to tell them how to behave, Youth Connections decided to take the heat off the kids, and to put the responsibility for youth use of



Counter Ads from New Mexico Media Literacy Project

The illustrations for this article are from the New Mexico Media Literacy Project. They demonstrate how you can "talk back" to deceptive or harmful media messages by creating **counter-ads**. These are parodies of advertisements, delivering more truthful or constructive messages using the same persuasion techniques as real ads.

By creating counter-ads, you can apply media literacy skills to communicate positive messages, in a fun and engaging exercise.

The simplest way to create a counter-ad is to alter a real ad by changing the text or adding graphic elements; just write or draw over the original ad, or paste new materials onto it. You can also create a counter-ad by drawing a new image, copying the design and layout of a real ad. Collage techniques work well, too. You can write scripts for radio or TV counter-ads, and read them to a class or group. Or take it a step further and record or videotape your counter-ad.

Learn more about integrating counter ads into your media literacy work at NMMLP's Catalyst Institute, which offers an intensive training experience in media literacy concepts and skills designed to deepen understanding of media issues and provide a solid foundation for media activism.

Learn more at <http://nmmlp.org>

“This is cool,”
expressed
one student. **“We
need to know
what it all means.”**

tobacco, alcohol, and drugs on the adults. Rather than attempting to change kids' behavior related to drug use (which *does* remain an important goal in our community), the goal of *this* project was to change adult behavior. Helena's *adults* needed to change. They needed to send a different message to kids about use. They needed education about the importance of setting clear boundaries, expectations, and rules for kids.

Teachers explained to students that adults in their community take the job of raising healthy kids seriously, citing Peter Scales' statement from his research on developmental assets:

“Adults have the responsibility to create the conditions under which adolescents, while they are adolescents,

can be healthy, productive, caring, and happy.”

When our survey results show that kids think adults don't care if they use, we want to change our behavior as adults and send a different, healthier message. Some students seemed skeptical about what we were asking; some simply may not have understood the

goal of the social marketing phase of the project right away. One participant honestly spoke the words many of her classmates must have been thinking when she asked, “So, you mean you want us to tell our parents to set more limits when that's the last thing we want?”

To navigate these tricky waters, teachers led students through discussions about limit setting and safety. Students were able to recall times when adults' limits for them kept them safe and allowed them to grow up in healthy ways. Kids shared poignant stories about parents who would not let them cross the street alone; others shared stories about parents who weren't around to set limits. In one activity, students were asked to compare a world without limits to a world that had

limits that supported healthy development. Kids began to see some merit in a world with limits. They became eager to talk to adults about what they needed in order to be safe. Some students expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk to adults about issues that are important to them and that have great impact in their lives. Once kids realized that they were in a pretty unique position to talk to the adults of their community honestly, they were eager to get going, and they had a lot to say.

Students were asked to craft media messages that would convey the idea that setting limits is good for kids. Students were assigned the job of creating taglines and slogans for the social marketing component of the project and then to create either a television or radio public service announcement, a print ad, a billboard, a letter to the editor, or an editorial cartoon expressing that message. Students created impressive, frank taglines, including:

If now's not the time, when is? Talk to your kids.

How can I break the rules if I don't know what they are?

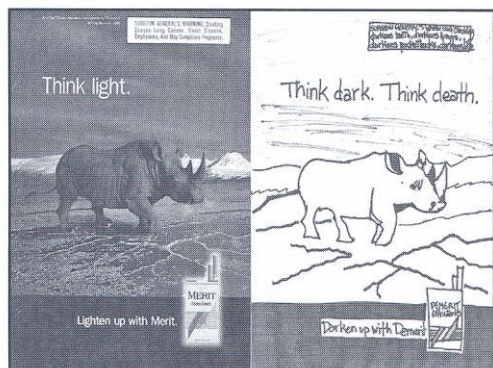
Set boundaries. It's a parent's job.

Know me; know my friends; know what we do.

Don't assume. Let's talk.

Students did pre-production work in class. They were serious about the task. They had a message to convey and they wanted to get it right. The conversations were rich. They asked each other for feedback. Was this the best way to illustrate this message? Do you “get it?” How can I make this clearer? Do you think this is serious enough? How many seconds of “eye time” do we get for our billboard? The creation of storyboards, scripts, drawings, diagrams, stage directions, logos and slogans commanded class time.

After students finalized their work, all projects were presented in class and presentations were taped. Students selected



their top choices, after which Youth Connections members selected the top projects for production. In concert with local television and radio stations, and with the support of community prevention specialists from a local treatment center, students who are interested in the production phase of the project will produce the top six TV public service announcements (PSA), twelve radio PSAs, one billboard, and one print advertisement. Students will also see their letters to the editor and their editorial cartoons in the local newspaper. Production is scheduled for this summer, with the campaign to be launched sometime this fall.

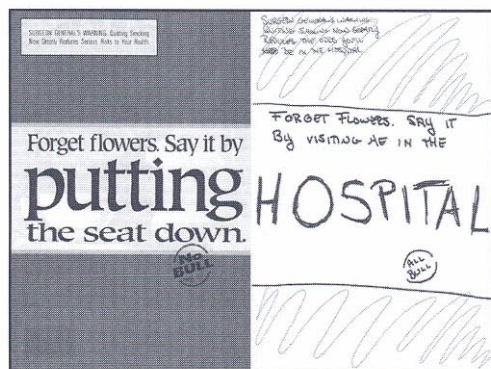
THIS PILOT PROJECT was an overwhelming success in the classroom. Nearly 70 percent of our students reported that they would participate in a school/community partnership like this again because it was “fun and interesting.” Without reservation, all three of us plan to teach this media unit again, and are working to expand the project to the 6th and 8th grades. In the future, we would like to empower students to choose issues they would like to address in the Helena community. The effect this social marketing campaign will have on adult limit setting in the community cannot be measured. Results from the next MPNA may or may not indicate a change in percep-

tions among adolescents relative to Helena’s tolerance of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use by youth. However, this project clearly impacted 7th graders and their understanding of media and how to use it as a tool for change.

This project gave students background about media, the skills with which to analyze media and to think critically about information, and then asked them to put that information to use as social change agents in their town. Putting the tools of media analysis and media production in the hands of students allows them to think critically about the information that comes their way, whether in a news-cast, a set of song lyrics, or a teacher’s lesson. Thinking critically about information allows students to develop skills of intellectual discernment. Giving voice to young people’s concerns empowers them to be participants in the community, and enlivens their learning experiences. This project has sparked community involvement and enthusiasm for other media projects. There are ambitious plans to team up with the local community access television station to produce a youth news show, on-going school/community partnerships concerning other health issues and media, and interest in student-produced documentaries about issues significant to Helena’s youth. **CMR**

“Once kids realized that they were in a pretty unique position to talk to the adults of their community honestly, they were eager to get going, and they had a lot to say.”

The project’s teachers, Claudia Crase and Kathie Lorang of Helena Middle School, and Kathryn Reed of C.R. Anderson Middle School, wish to give a hearty thanks to Dorothy Bradshaw for her extraordinary efforts in planning and implementing this project. Youth Connections and the Helena School District #1 supported this pilot project.



More Media, Not More News

by Francis Rolt

About the Author

Francis Rolt is Director of Common Ground-Radio and is based at Search for Common Ground's office in Brussels. He was previously director of SFCG's Studio Ijambo in Burundi, and has worked in radio for nearly twenty years

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THAT THE MEDIA CAN have a negative, exacerbating effect on conflict is not at issue. Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) in Rwanda is the classic example. What few people pick up on is that RTL was essentially a local music station. It wasn't news and current affairs which inspired and maintained the 1994 genocide, but a mix of music and up-beat, DJ-style 'discussion'. As the then Canadian ambassador, Lucie Edwards, later said: "The question of Radio Mille Collines propaganda is a difficult one. There were so many genuinely silly things being said on the station, so many obvious lies, that it was hard to take it seriously... Nevertheless, everyone listened to it ..."¹

Hate radio is banal, as North American shock-jock talk-shows prove everyday. And from my own experience in Burundi in the late 1990s I know that all kinds of media products can have a positive or negative impact on all stages of a conflict.

Yet serious discussion in the West on the media and conflict resolution is usually hi-jacked by an emotional debate about the news media and objectivity. Many Western news journalists are angered by the suggestion that they have a responsibility beyond objective reporting, and seem to believe that the suggestion is a criticism of the ideal of objectivity. On the contrary, the classic news journalist's aspiration to objectivity is itself an important tool in conflict resolution. Without reliable news and information people in conflict zones have to rely on rumour, and rumour invariably spreads the distrust and stereotyping which feed war.

Many journalists already debate the potential which the new, 'live from a conflict zone' reporting has to feed a conflict, and the need for journalists to be aware of this potential. Despite this, there's a chasm

in the debate. Media is much more than news and current affairs yet few individuals or organisations working in conflict zones have taken on board any of all the possible media interventions, apart from news and current affairs, which can have a positive impact on a conflict.

There are two reasons for this apparent blindness. In the international media environment news and current affairs journalists are the ones who deal with conflict. The result is that news journalists feel that they are the only ones with a stake in the debate, and so dominate the discussion. Secondly, most NGOs and international organisations working in areas of conflict view the media as either a PR tool, or as a loudspeaker to announce disaster, claim support, and denounce evil. The next, essential step, that of creating and supporting positive media interventions in conflict is a long time coming.

Such interventions will take the media and the agencies beyond news and current affairs (to say nothing of PR), and into the more complex areas of non-adversarial talk shows, programme or article exchange between zones of conflict, cartoons (enshrining or breaking down stereotypes of 'the other', the enemy), 'intended outcome' radio and TV dramas and soap operas, vox pops (giving a voice to the voiceless), comic books, theatre, music and song. Media is all these things, and more; drama, story, character and humour, these are what attract us as humans, regardless of whether we live in war-torn Africa or in Western Europe.

People in conflict zones, even refugees, continue to go about their usual lives, perhaps in a more circumscribed way, but they still listen to and make music, dance, laugh at cartoons and TV comedies, tell stories and exchange ideas with a neighbour. They form their own opinions by sifting carefully through all the information and opinion gathered from these dif-

¹ Hate Radio; Rwanda, Radio Netherlands website <http://www.rnw.nl/realradio/dossiers/html/rwanda-h.html>

ferent sources. Life doesn't begin and end with news and current affairs. In fact, in most conflict zones people quickly grow tired of political speeches, debates, and reports of more violence – the subject of the albeit very important current affairs programmes. Listeners tune out and lose hope, seeking solace in radio or TV drama and music programmes.

NON-NEWS MEDIA and conflict resolution is a relatively new field, but not that new. To take a few examples from the work of *Common Ground* around the world; since 1995 Studio Ijambo in Burundi has been making radio programmes such as a radio soap opera with a regular listenership of over 90% of the population which emphasises the commonalities between Hutu and Tutsi (language, culture, everyday life), the common ground rather than the divisions. And in general the Studio is credited with, 'creating a new vocabulary of peaceful coexistence, dialogue and negotiation in the country'.²

In 1994 in the Middle East we began holding regular meetings of media professionals to explore the role of the media in conflict and its possible resolution. Gradually there emerged a network of media leaders who were willing to cooperate on such projects as a jointly authored book and newspaper series on the future of the region, exchanges of articles, and a co-produced TV documentary which appeared in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

In the United States we have worked with Brian Lehrer of WNYC radio in

New York for over ten years, developing new, non-adversarial talk-show techniques which deliver interesting, exciting programmes and attract large audiences. After September 11, one Lehrer call-in show was limited to Arab-American and Muslim-American callers. One listener emailed: "This programme really humanised the conflict and somehow relieved the pressure to have a view that hatched on ideological lines."³

And in April 1997, *Common Ground* brought together Angolan musicians from both sides of the long-running conflict to record a Peace Song entitled *A Paz E Que O Povo Chama* (People Are Calling for Peace). It took a year of negotiations and mediated discussions to overcome the divisions between the musicians, but finally thirty-five popular Angolan musicians put aside these differences to create an anthem to peace. The Angola Peace Song continues to do its work in Angolan society at all levels. Before the peace accord both the audio and video forms of the song were regularly aired on state-run television. And in February of 2002, a parliamentarian ended her speech on the floor of the assembly with the closing words of the song, "People are calling for peace."

There are innumerable other possible examples, and rather than sticking with a sterile debate on media, news and objectivity, it is time these and all the other possible forms of conflict resolution media are more widely practiced, debated, and improved. **CMR**

Search for Common Ground

Our Mission

Our mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict: away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions.

Although the world is overly polarized and violence is much too prevalent, we remain essentially optimistic. Our view is that, on the whole, history is moving in positive directions. Although some of the conflicts we are currently dealing with may seem intractable, there are successful examples of cooperative conflict resolution that we can look to for inspiration - such as in South Africa, where an unjust system was transformed through negotiations and an inclusive peace process.

"There is no conflict that cannot be resolved. Violent conflict is created and sustained by human beings, and it can be ended by human beings."

Senator George Mitchell

"The opportunity for cooperation is there, even in our most vexing disputes, if we only bother to look for it."

William Raspberry,
Washington Post Columnist

2 Report #2, Evaluation of Studio Ijambo, By Amr Abdalla, Ph.D. et al, 2002

3 Listener email, April 4 2002, Brooklyn, NY

This article originally appeared in POWER OF THE MEDIA, A HANDBOOK FOR PEACEBUILDERS, published by European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Search for Common Ground, and IMPACS (June 2003.)

Re-inventing the Wheels of Social Change

by James Piecowye

About the Author

Dr. James Piecowye is a dreamer, chaser of audacious ideas, a student, and above all an idea circus ringmaster who believes that every experience we have should be extraordinary or it is simply wasted time and energy. No regrets, no looking back. Dr. Piecowye has been teaching in the College of Communication and Media Sciences at Zayed University in Dubai for the last five years.

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WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME of rapid and radical social change. We are living in a time that requires rapid and radical re-conceptualization of the idea of education.

As educators, parents and generally responsible people, we all hope to be given the necessary tools to enable our productive participation in our evolving society.

The problem is our human nature, which ironically is also our only hope. Our human nature is simultaneously a positive and negative influence on our goals and aspirations. As Francis Fukuyama (2002) has suggested, human nature both shapes and constrains the very development we hope to see materialize.

Our human nature is premised on the fact that we are cultural animals. We learn from our experiences and pass on these lessons to others. The learning that takes place through formal and informal education from kindergarten through retirement can be broadly categorized as the ongoing formation of our human nature. It is human nature that informs our reading of the environment and our development within our particular ecology.

As David Weinberger (2002) has suggested in his analysis of the "technologification" of mankind, our world works well if all the pieces are stable and predictable. Unfortunately, technology among other developments has compromised all social interactions, according to William Ray (2001), all but neutralizing face-to-face communication and supplanting it with highly mediated forms of communication.

It is time that our education models were dramatically re-structured to meet the demands of our evolving mediated environment.

Reading, writing and arithmetic are still essential foundation pieces to our education, but unless these building blocks are operationalized they are nothing

more than static dissociated pieces of a disjointed larger picture.

In a time that has never been more mediated, our global education systems need to recognize the potential for communication and media literacy to provide the means to fundamentally re-invent curriculums, transforming them into tools of social change.

Communication and media literacy is more than the asking of pertinent questions about what we see. Communication and media literacy is the noticing of what's not there and attaining of the instincts to question what lies behind story constructions of all sorts. Communication and media literacy is the recognition of the motives, the values, and the guiding influences on the stories we consume daily. Communication and media literacy is the simple awareness of how the factors mentioned above fundamentally influence discrete content and then taking the insight gained and doing communication in a manner that addresses the concerns revealed.

The question raised in most education circles is how to make communication and media literacy components fit existing curriculums. Maybe education systems need to be re-considered and re-imagined from the bottom up. Maybe communication and media literacy cannot be fit into the existing education systems.

It is not enough to say we will place communication and media literacy into the health program of a school because it is vital to character development. By pigeonholing communication and media literacy into the space of character development, as is the case in many education systems today, educators are failing to grasp the bigger picture of the concept and inadvertently suggesting that like reading, writing and arithmetic communication and media literacy can be taught in isolation from the greater social ecol-

ogy we are being prepared for.

Go to a school dance and listen to the ten year olds talk fashion and how Jennifer Lopez has a big butt. Watch what children are watching on television, look at their readings, listen to their music and then re-consider why people today have very particular views on poverty, terrorism, global warming, even femininity. It is through the many variants of communication, not simply media, that our societies are being transformed and re-educated about the world and themselves.

Media and communication are part of everything we do and must be treated like that in the education process itself. To not include media and communication literacy as an integrated cross curriculum component of any education system is to willingly fail to impart a complete education!

Our children are floundering in a media wasteland can we afford to not make sure they are media and communication literate?

Obviously we cannot.

But all too often schools have become stagnant learning environments that forgo an evolving learning model for predictability through repetitive practices on the parts of both the educators and students.

What seems to be forgotten or simply ignored in education circles today is that communication, from television through interactions with a mobile phone sales person, is an instrument of immediate and ongoing socialization.

It needs to be reinforced that we are all social agents whose reflections, self-analysis and knowledge lead to actions that confront our current standpoints from the perspective of new conditions (Semali, 2000).

We need to actively engage in the development of programs that instill three vital traits in students: understanding, questioning, and doing (Semali, 2000).

At Zayed University, in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), where media literacy is in its infancy compared to Canada, Australia, Britain and even the United States, we are actively working to develop an indigenous media and communication literacy model that is capable of being ex-

ported across the region and the world.

HOW ARE WE DOING THIS? Through the creation of integrated courses that blur the lines of typical course content. We do this by superimposing the ideas of understanding, questioning and doing onto real world projects that embody contemporary education basics and real world thinking.

We call the innovative model Zayed Media Lab (ZML). Zayed Media Lab was a response to the simple question, why not? Why not make education relevant to the global situation we are part of and the society we are in.

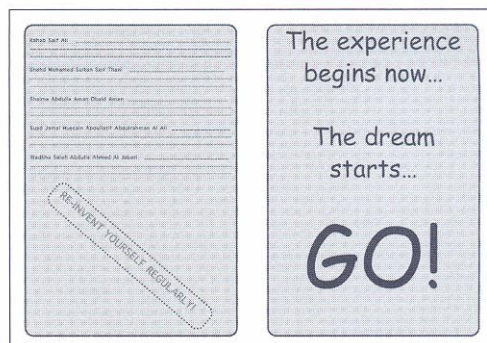
The answer was to combine a series of courses into a single entity and literally build the courses as they progressed around real-time, real-world projects. These projects were envisioned as a place where communication and media literacy was not only studied but also lived.

What was born was a teaching concept that pushes the boundaries of leadership, communication, media literacy, innovation and training to the edge. What we have created is a communication and media enabled social change incubator.

In ZML students learn to think differently, not as students, but as professionals interacting with and creating the mediation of the world. This thinking is buttressed against real projects with real deadlines. Students are provided with an enabling environment in which to explore the means of structuring content and arriving at a design for that content which allows it to reach the audience in an imaginative way.

The fundamental premise of ZML is the holistic integration of knowledge, action and evaluation. It is impossible to operate as an island, as current education practices would have us believe, and this means that everything being learned and applied through ZML is related. The success of this education concept is in the students seeing the activities of research, writing, design and presentation all working together.

“Communication and media literacy is the noticing of what’s not there and attaining of the instincts to question what lies behind story constructions of all sorts.”



“Communication and media literacy is the recognition of the motives, the values, and the guiding influences on the stories we consume daily.”

Students are encouraged from day one to aim high and celebrate spectacular failure! Aside from lessons in the specifics of writing, design and research students engage in what we call impossible projects, those projects that they dream about but don't necessarily feel they could do. We call this the grand adventure. In this respect ZML mimics the real world in its demand to stretch the limits of perceived ability.

ZML is about putting in place the environment for cultivating the attitude and developing the skills necessary for students to become social change agents in the U.A.E. What ZML does is profoundly change the way students understand their role in the rapidly developing U.A.E. society.

We are in the midst of a transformation in the process of education and what it means to be educated. We are moving from a manufacturing based economy to a knowledge economy. The transformation that is taking place is significant, systematic and sustained (Caldwell 2004).

We believe that education is failing to keep up with the change taking place and we aim to change that, ZML is the start.

The emerging knowledge economy is creating the need for innovative learning cultures (Caldwell 2004). What we are witnessing is the need for new kinds of intelligences: learning intelligence, technological intelligences, technological intelligence, economic intelligence, social intelligence, political intelligence, and cultural intelligence (Caldwell 2004). These may also be called contextualized multiple intelligences. Communication and media literacy is the container that can bring these intelligences together and offer them a contextual relationship in which to develop. ZML is the starting point.

The end result of ZML is a student who has assembled, considered and tested a series of social experiments that when deployed in the community could lead to significant social change. ZML is an ongoing experiment in informed social change. **cMr**

What is Zayed University? *Zayed University, at seven years old, is the newest federally funded university in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). Zayed University has a number of distinguishing characteristics: it is a women's only University; it employs an outcomes-based learning model; has a 7:1 student faculty ratio; and is arguably the most technologically advanced institution in the region. Every student at Zayed University has a personal laptop, unlimited access to high-speed proxy free internet while on campus, as well as laser printers and NEC projectors in virtually every classroom.*

Zayed University students are English as a foreign language learners who go through intensive English language training, they need to have a TOFEL score of 500 to enter the degree programs. With all the western trappings, Zayed University students are still very much rooted in the evolving culture of the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). Virtually every student at Zayed University still wears a traditional Shaila (the black head scarf), and Abaya (the black gown) over their clothes. In the past, many women would wear colourful and ornate dresses under the Abaya which is slowly giving way to western jeans, slacks, and even skirts to the chagrin of parents.

Zayed University students are walking a tight rope between the past, present and future of the U.A.E., which is little more than 30 years old. Students at Zayed University are in many cases the first women in their families to be studying to obtain a university education.

Learn more about Zayed University: www.zu.ac.ae

Making Media That Matters In Minutes

Building Citizens through Media for 15 Years

by John Arke

FOR EVERY YEAR of the last fifteen, on one day in early September the squirrels and children and birds have to clear out of the northeast corner of Powderhorn Park in Minneapolis, at least for the lunch hour. That is when you will see over sixty seniors from nearby South High walking down the sidewalk to take over the browning grass under the tall trees. Some of the seniors bring grills and burgers, some bring sack lunches from home, others carry sacks of fast food.

Along with the seniors come a few adults. Two are teachers from South High, two are from the University of Minnesota, and two more are from the Minneapolis Television Network (MTN), the local public access cable organization. These are the two carrying video cameras. One of the MTN representatives, a man named J.C., has a habit of saying, "I'm hearing voices," but he isn't talking about audio hallucinations. He is referring to the students.

The seniors are part of a program called VOICES, and this is their first get-together of the school year. They are gathered for something called the Powderhorn Pastry Picnic, though the pastry is a thing of the past. It is lunchtime, after all, and the smell of charcoal-grilled burgers is in the air. Hardly anybody calls it by its full name any more. The event is called the "PPP."

VOICES stands for "Values, Options, Issues and Choices in Society." It is a collaborative effort of South High School, MTN, and the Humphrey Forum, a museum at the University of Minnesota dedicated to Minnesota statesman and former Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Steven Sandell, the director of the Humphrey Forum, introduces himself to the seniors at the PPP. He explains the genesis of VOICES as an outreach program of the Forum. "I thought there were a lot of lessons to teach and our museum

was too small to have a really large audience. I thought radio and television were the way to do it."

Every student at the PPP gets a copy of the test that applicants for U.S. citizenship have to pass. The seniors form groups to fill out the test. They have to negotiate with other students and the adults to get the answers they don't know. While they are doing this, another MTN person is showing one of the students how to run a small video camera. He tells her to get a few shots and then to show somebody else how to operate it.

The VOICES program is an English class that is also a social studies class that is something much more. Students learn about citizenship and about the media. Sandell said, "Civic education has to build civic skills, and the most important civic skills are reading and writing." These days reading and writing must include the ability to read and write mass media, and that is exactly what the students are doing this lunch hour. They are learning how to use the camera. Next week they will travel to the studios of MTN to learn even more about how television works and how to make their own television show.

Julia Mann is a VOICES student this past year who worked on a documentary about MTN. She says, "Before VOICES when I watched TV I never thought about the process to make it." But now when she watches a show she thinks about all the shots and how the filmmakers got them and trimmed them.

During the year, students in VOICES learn video production and make two short documentaries about issues in society. Topics covered by projects this year include the youth vote, organic agriculture, the local smoking ban, school funding, environmental sustainability, development along the city's riverfront, child care, and the future of public access television in Minneapolis.

About the Author

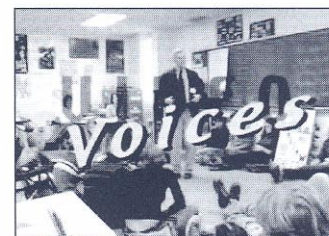
John Akre is a Production Specialist / Instructor at Minneapolis Television Network.

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Resources

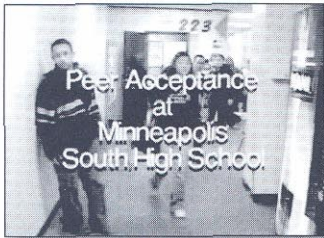
Minneapolis Television Network
www.mtn.org/

The Humphrey Forum:
www.hhh.umn.edu/humphrey-forum/outr.htm



Steve Sandell of the Humphrey Forum addresses the VOICES class at South High

Below and next page: Scenes from a VOICES video project, "Peer Acceptance at Minneapolis South High School."



"Every year I am even more amazed by the work of the Voices students," says MTN Executive Director Pam Colby. "Many of them take on really edgy subject matter, push the boundaries and do that with style and high production values. It is very impressive."

Sandell says that these videos address issues in a way not often seen in the mainstream media. "Young people think about what is possible, in health care, in child care, in other issues. Their first question is often, 'Wouldn't it be good if...' or 'What if...'"

"If people can talk about possibilities it is more conducive to social change than talking about corruption, crime and cynical compromise," Sandell says. He adds that this was also the philosophy of Hubert Humphrey. "Humphrey was an optimist. He believed that the federal government was a way to solve problems and I think young people believe that there is a way to solve problems."

One of the first steps in solving problems is being able to talk about them, and Sandell includes this in the civic education aspect of VOICES. He says that civic education is about the ability to speak and listen, to enter into a debate "and not be overwhelmed by the personal aspects of it but recognize the policies and issues."

Mann said that the class helped her voice her opinion. She talked about the empowerment she gained in class discussions on issues that are hard for anybody to talk about, such as rape. "It allowed for all of us sixty plus students to sit in a room and have a conversation and be respectful about the issues." Abby Norlin-Weaver, one of Mann's classmates, adds, "I think that VOICES has taught me how to get more involved in the community and in government. It showed that what I decide to do can make a difference."

VOICES STUDENTS LEARN both that they can change society, and also how other forces, in particular the media, bring about social change. "I think that the media changes society because it very easily persuades people to change their opinions based on what they see and hear," says VOICES student Gabriel Campana.

Norlin-Weaver adds, "Stereotypes are formed by the media. I think the news changes how you see things."

Grace Flannery, whose video was about how residents of Minneapolis identify their city, adds, "You do not hear about an issue until it is in the media. If you do not know about something you cannot be concerned about it. The media has control over what people are thinking and talking about."

Students in VOICES learn very early in the school year about how media can manipulate reality. They learn the process of video editing by creating their own version of the PPP. They form groups and each group gets some of the tapes from the event. From that tape they edit their own short piece. When they screen all the projects, they see very clearly how "objective" videotape can create very subjective, unique and diverse versions of the same event. From that they can guess that the mainstream media does the same thing. TV can shape a version of reality that might be very different from how they might experience it. Later on, in producing their group projects, they experience the ethics of video production themselves as they attempt to tell a story about the social issue they are tackling.

J.C. Bagdadi, MTN's Senior Production Manager, has been involved in VOICES since the beginning of the program. As a political refugee from Qadhafi's Libya, he always emphasizes the freedom of speech aspects of public access television. He has designed training methods for the class that build media literacy skills. For camera training, he has developed a session called, ICE: In Camera Edits. Students learn the camera by carefully taping only shots that tell a story, and recording them in the correct order without editing. Playing back these early efforts to the class and discussing them build the capacity in VOICES students to read media and make media.

Mark Bispala, who was a student in the program in its first year, looks back at his own experience with the class. "I think you become more aware of the media's impact and the way visual images are influencing our thoughts as citizens. We are

bombarded with imagery and we have to use our eyes in different ways to interpret these symbols."

One of the goals of Media Literacy is to turn passive TV consumers into active citizens. VOICES does this both in its training for youth, but also by programming the youth-produced projects in the long running *Video Voices* show on MTN. The *Video Voices* TV program has been on MTN as long as VOICES classes have been coming down to the MTN studio.

Sandell thinks that VOICES is as much about the audience that watches the videos that the youth produce as it is about the learning experience that the students have. "The *Video Voices* show is dedicated to this mission of civic education, giving the broader community a chance to take a look at the questions that young people ask and giving young people a chance to ask questions and pursue the answers."

Norlin-Weaver adds, "I think that our video impacts society and makes a difference by informing people."

VOICES also introduces a new generation to public access television every year. Some VOICES students, like Bispala, have remained active with MTN over the years. Joel Rainville, a VOICES student in the 1998-1999 school year, is not only active in a number of civic organizations, he is also a member of the MTN Board.

Anthony Johannes, a student whose video was about environmental sustainability initiatives in Minneapolis, said that one of the most valuable aspects of VOICES was introducing him to public access television. He says, "MTN is a place where the average person can get their voice out, and reach a lot of people. It is very cool."

Johannes adds, "Voices has been great. It is such a unique class." **CMR**



Some VOICES students past and present (clockwise from upper left corner) Will Muessig, Abby Norlin-Weaver, Anthony Johannes, Grace Flannery, Mark Bispala, Madeline Shadduck, Ben Greiling, Julia Mann, Gabriel Campana.

De-stigmatize This

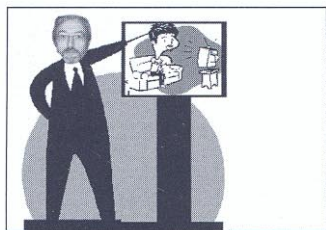
by Antonio Correia

About the Author

Antonio Correia is the station manager of New Castle Community Television. He is also a member of the ACM-NE Board of directors, and co-founder of the ACM-NE NY Chapter. He has been working in community media for the last 26 years on both sides of the Atlantic. A retired Army Captain, Antonio has a degree in Media Communications and a degree in Film.

Antonio is also a instructor at Westchester Community College.

Antonio can be reached at stationmanager@ncctv.org



“MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL. Why bother with media literacy at all?”

We are running on empty, people. Despite the progress achieved in the last 40 years of national widespread cablecasting, public access television is still suffering from long-time chronic malaises that we all know about but always find troublesome to articulate on paper. Most access centers in the country live in regional isolation and, therefore, they suffer from the “alone-on-a-desert-island” complex. And the smaller the station, the more hats access providers have to wear to keep things going. It is not an accident that we are more concerned with little things such as avoiding dead air, equipment malfunctions, human error, personalities’ management, short staffing, you know...routine, than with larger-than-life issues like free speech and distribution quality. After all, it is a television station, right? In fact, most public access television providers inexorably get relegated to the role of custodians of program production and distribution. And that hurts us, both professionally and financially.

We keep saying that we have a noble mandate and that we intend to fill it everyday, one program, one promo, one PSA, one station ID at a time. And, by Thor, we are like cockroaches; we just don’t go away. We are here to infest your cable boxes until doomsday, or bedtime, whichever comes first. Yet we do it away from mainstream media, which raises the question: What are we showing that is so damned important that minimizes mundane things like outreach, fundraising, production values, community recognition, and media literacy programs? Do you believe for a second that Dirk Koning had a vision of the Grand Rapids Community mMedia cCenter as a breeding ground for mediocrity? Can you imagine George Stoney inciting his fresh

troops at the Alternate Media Center to develop bad ideas, no strategy of delivery, and then send those illiterate people west? George may have some radical ideas on how people should stand around in a studio. I use those ideas on young trainees to make them think and explore the possibilities of a studio interview. But George is not advocating originality over substance. George is all about substance. So should we be.

The fact is that for the most part public access TV is bad TV. Now let’s go out there, acknowledge it and start our own self-imposed, twelve-step program. Granted, some access centers are passing with flying colors. In fact, if the regional and national video festivals’ winning entries were to be testimony of what is being shown throughout the United States of America on public access channels, I would be left with nothing to write about. But, last time I checked, we were still known as the place where the local weirdos teach how to whistle “Do you know the way to San Jose” while feeding crackers to a Chihuahua on steroids. It would be funny if it weren’t true; it would be funny if the weirdo knew how to whistle; it would be funny if the lights weren’t bouncing off his bald head like tungsten headlights; it would be funny if his multicolored mardi-gras, 3-inch plastic beads weren’t crackling against the lapel microphone; it would be funny if you couldn’t see his butt crack every time he feeds the dog; it would be funny if you didn’t have to hear someone shouting instructions from the control room; it would be funny if “Do you know the way to San Jose” didn’t sound so much like “Highway to Hell”; it would be funny if this were the only case we could report. Ah, those are the days!!!

Every center has its own collection of comic/horror stories. On real TV, they call them “bloopers.” Here we call them

"The Usual." Maybe one day someone will index them all into a national encyclopedia of cable access mementos. The problem with these "usualities" is that they are preventable, starting with the immediate replacement of the talent himself. I can hear some of you shouting already: "But that's censorship," to which I will reply: "No ladies and gentlemen. Keeping this young lad away from public ridicule and the center from community embarrassment is not censorship. It's coming-to-your-senses-ship. If you give a five-year-old a hammer and he starts hammering every nail he sees, you say: 'Look how great he looks with that hammer. He is a born carpenter.'" But if the damned kid starts hammering everything within his reach, you suddenly dart in his direction to get the hammer back, right? Is that carpentry censorship? Here's an original thought: Take these people out of the studio and refer them to a circus agent. They are missing their calling. My wife keeps reminding me of the old saying: "Everything is worth taping. Not everything is worth watching."

While commercial television caters to advertisers for the obvious buck, 21st century public access television seems to cater to copycatism just to be on the air. That wouldn't be a bad thing if we would copy the good stuff, no matter its content. The more garbage we see on cable, the more garbage copies we see on public access television, multiplied by a factor of 2,000. Isn't it ironic that while we take pride in being an alternate outlet, we keep offering bad versions of the same sad spectacle we so strongly despise? There have never been so many outlets for imagery and so little understanding of what we are watching. The messages are sanitized, molded to our consumer appetite for stability and comfort, and we eat it by the ton like hamburgers. Since what PEG is doing is perpetuating the worst in cable-copying, we end up with a social scenario that thrives on mediocrity, both technically and culturally. Our messages are being dissolved in a cloud of cultural media emptiness.

It is common to hear among our peers that access television is more than a job. It's a calling, a refuge from the blatant

selections of corporate imagery shoved down innocent viewers' throats. We feel we've got the moral high ground, and we look down on commercial TV as a wasteland. The problem is that, one: the viewers are not innocent; they have choices and they exercise their right to choose with a handheld remote device; and two: you as a coordinator, a manager, an executive director, a programmer, you are also making the same type of decisions corporations make every single day. You may be making less money than your cable counterparts, but isn't the media literacy accountability the same?

Let's see: you decide what airs and at what time; you offer what you believe to be better time slots to more reliable, better looking, easier-on-the-ear producers; you create policies and procedures to prevent abnormalities from plaguing your cocoon with complaints; you even create block-scheduling to cater to viewership habits. All these decisions are made with one sole purpose: To make you look good. Good before your board, your staff, your elected officials, your viewers, even your peers. The whole process is about you delivering on expectations. You may call it policies and procedures, community standards, aesthetic standards or whatever other labeling euphemisms you were resourceful enough to craft but, ultimately, you are taking charge of what messages your community is getting and when. You want your station to look good. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. What I wonder is why keep that approach just for yourself? Why not take that same approach in all the aspects of program production and distribution? Shouldn't access managers' media literacy skills lead by example?

THE CURRENT POINT-AND-SHOOT, fire-and-forget approach is not only keeping PEG TV in the back of the media literacy bus, it is also making our recruiting efforts harder. As a living entity, public access television centers have a duty to reach out to a new generation of media watchers, media makers, video activists, managers, lobbyists, writers, a new crop of elected officials, and other people ready

"The fact is that for the most part public access TV is bad TV. Now let's go out there, acknowledge it and start our own self-imposed, twelve-step program."

“Media managers need to be media literate not only about tools but about the effects of good and bad content delivery.”

to take action to defend both their right to individual expression and their community values. The new generation of recruits already knows about us (for some zapping accident). Through our facilities, they get exposed to new cameras, new editing stations, and new software. They are free to experiment within a professional environment (so they hope), free of parental or peer pressure, and they pay with the currency we use: sweat, energy, new ideas, and fun. Remember fun? It's all good. Just don't let technology's bright lights blind you. Use it to serve better content and, better distribution, side by side with media literacy.

Media managers need to be media literate not only about tools but about the effects of good and bad content delivery. To be able to pick and choose the right tools is as important as the ability to pick and choose who delivers the message and how that message can be effectively distributed and understood. If we are going to be serious about extracting the maximum from our equipment to make our centers' output look good, why not do the same with our talent pool? That alone may be even more problematic to address than equipment, but isn't it necessary? Don't we have the same process/product intentions in mind? Hasn't the correlation between having our talents/producers look good and we/the center look good ever been so interwoven? What about your viewers? Isn't the community interested in getting good-looking/well-presented programs? Again, I will let the non-believers exhale: "But that's discrimination. A mandatory talents' triage would disenfranchise all those people who cannot deliver their message like a Bill Moyers or a Bill O'Reilly." At the risk of repeating myself: we are in the business of efficient communication. If we don't take good care of the messenger, the message will never be understood, or heard, for that matter.

Every center has hundreds of tales of great content spoiled by bad presentation, but not all of it is the talents' fault. I can suggest that production and distribution problems are the responsibility of each access provider. We are supposed to be

advocates for media literacy. Our mandate is to inform, to instruct, to entertain, to become more effective communicators, and to encourage our viewers to think critically about the cultural realities that affect the public sphere. Let's fulfill that mandate, even if that means that we are becoming intellectual snobs. I am sure you have been called worse. Besides, we already are snobs. Technical snobs. The vendors' area in Monterey was filled with snobs like us. As long as America's spirit of volunteerism is alive, PEG centers will never run out of talent, staff, board members, and free speech. Raising the level of in-house media literacy and production values is not going to create a black hole of public support. By taking aim at higher media literacy standards, access centers will attract more efficient communicators. More efficient communicators will provide better message delivery. Better message delivery will attract more viewers. More viewers will attract more public and financial support. More public and financial support will attract better structures and staff. Better staff attracts more professionalism, and the cycle starts again.

NO ONE IS SAYING that you have to stop some programming from airing. What I am suggesting is that you need to place more emphasis on quality productions. The bottom line: People are watching. Let's not look like a bunch of amateurs. So the question should be: "OK, Antonio, how exactly do you take your station to a higher level of credibility?" Well, that's easy: (well...nothing really good comes easy) the same way our leadership has taken us into the decision-making halls of Washington D.C. You behave professionally, you dress the part, you speak the part, you meet the expectations, you skip excuses, you demand your fair share of financing; you do whatever it takes to let your viewers, your staff, your board, your local elected officials (get to know them on a first-name basis) your friends and family, let everybody know that you are serious about it. Still need help? Call your regional chapter of the ACM, call our fearless leader himself, Anthony Riddle (202-393-2650) and ask for

pointers. Heck, call me (914-238-2044), or e-mail (stationmanager@ncctv.org). Don't be afraid to ask for directions.

It's time to boldly go where we have been before. It's time to rip a page out of Stoney's AMC book and get back to the classroom. It is time to re-graduate people in access television. There are several higher-education institutions already offering community media as part of their curriculum, but that is going to take more time that we have. Right now we need the ACM to tap into the market of experienced access professionals and ask them to help. For lack of a better name, let's call these professionals ACM captains. We can finance this venture the same way any non-profit organization finances itself. No need to re-invent the wheel. We can even apply for government supported media literacy programs. Have those captains meet with the local access centers staff and boards to teach them how to improve their operations. They can pass

on their knowledge about franchise negotiations, data routers, legal matters, better lighting, to mention a few, and have them do it all on behalf of the ACM's quest for media literacy. Let's aim to be as big as McDonald's and open an ACM franchise on every corner of America. The ACM troops are already on the ground waiting for captains who can inspire them and train them well.

Daily, we are faced with political, financial, and ideological threats as well as the constant surge of technological challenges. By comparison, turning our centers into professional models of community representation should be a piece of cake. Public access television needs to be as common as apple pie. But it has to taste and smell like apple pie. Let's get rid of the stigma that access television is just a breeding ground for bad TV. And the way to do it is by having experienced captains to lead the charge.

What do you think? **CMR**

“For lack of a better name, let's call these professionals ACM captains.”

What *do* you think?

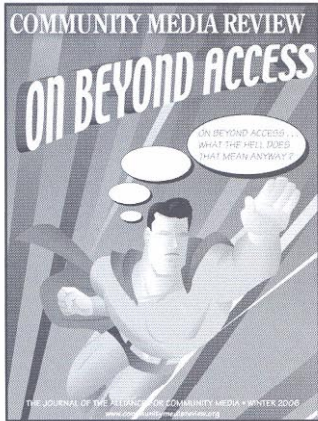
... about this article or anything else in this issue? Send us your thoughts, reactions, comments, criticisms, praises. We'll include your letters in the next issue.

Please send your comments to the CMR Board Chair, Lauren-Glenn Davitian, at davitian@cctv.org

The Last Word

Upcoming CMR Issues

If you have ideas or would like to contribute to these issues, please contact the Guest Editor(s)



People's Guide to the Telecommunications Act of 2006 – Part 2
Guest Editor, Lauren-Glenn Davitian, davitian@cctv.org

On Beyond Access

Mike Kroes, mak@fxntoonz.com & Kari Peterson, kapeters@dcn.org

Alliance for Community Media 30th Anniversary Conference Issue

Tim Goodwin, Goodwin@usxchange.net

World Information Order

Diana Agosta, dagosta@igc.org

Upcoming Media Literacy Conferences

The Fourth Annual Northeast Media Literacy Conference

Friday, March 31, 2006, Bishop Center, University of Connecticut
<http://medialiteracy.education.uconn.edu>

Facing the Media Crisis: Media Education for Reform, Justice and Democracy

Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) Summit 2006
October 6-8, 2006, Burlington, Vermont
<http://www.acmecolalition.org>

George Gerbner – The Passing Of A Hero

GEORGE GERBNER, educator and pioneer researcher into the influence of television violence on viewers' perceptions of the world, has died. He was 86.

Gerbner, the former dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, died January 7, 2006 at his home in Philadelphia of unspecified causes.

Always interested in storytelling, the Hungarian-born Gerbner became concerned as television and motion pictures supplanted family members and

friends in relaying tales both true and fictional.

By 2000, after more than three decades of study, Gerbner told National Public Radio that he had ceased to view television as a medium.

George Gerbner influenced many people working in the field of media literacy, media reform and media activism. May his work continue through the media literacy efforts we are all engaged in.



"I call it a cultural environment into which our children are born, and which tells all the stories," he said. "You know, who tells the stories of a culture really governs human behavior. It used to be the parent, the school, the church, the community. Now it's a handful of global conglomerates that have nothing to tell, but a great deal to sell."



"Connecting Communities"

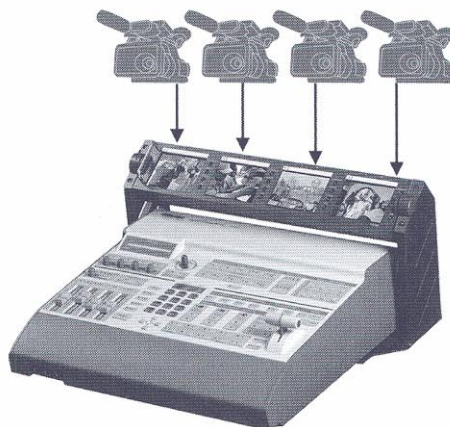
Alliance for Community Media
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The Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers

www.alliancecm.org
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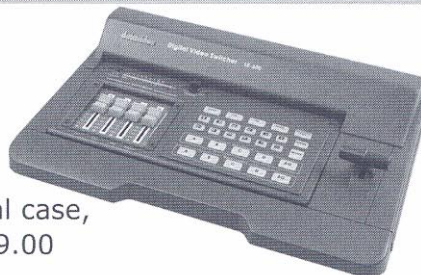
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Paul Congo, Executive Director of Access Monterey Peninsula, has spent over 25 years involved in community access television, and along the way, he learned what it takes to succeed in this broadcast field.

"VT[4][™] is the most practical, user-friendly video suite on the market. The fact that a single operator can have such power at his fingertips continues to amaze me. From broadcasting multi-camera live switched events to one man productions, VT[4][™]'s flexibility is unbeatable. The price point also makes it wonderful for public access. With budget cycles sometimes years apart, VT[4][™]'s affordability makes it possible to purchase multiple systems for use in training, remote locations, and in studio.

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"Bottom line: VT[4][™] is well-designed, stable, and supported by a company that started the desktop video revolution over a decade ago. There is nothing on the market that compares to the power and quality of this suite of tools, and the price point is far below anything else that even comes close."

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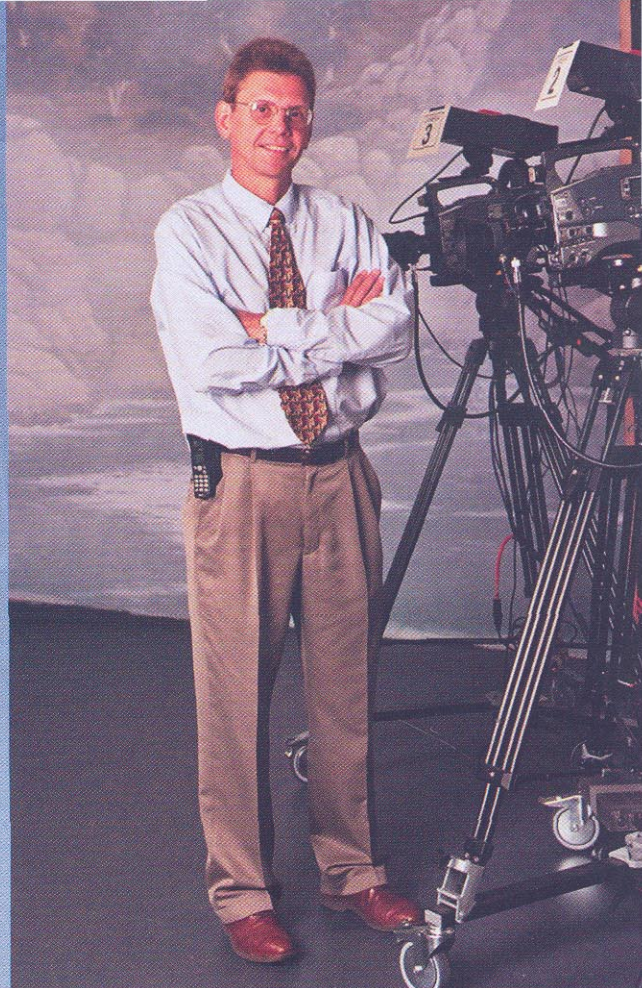
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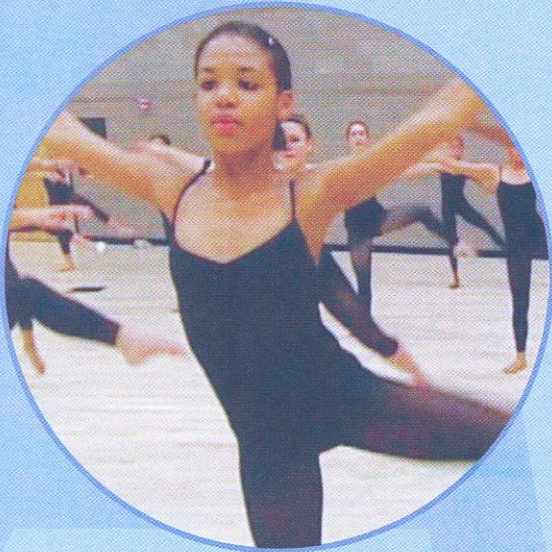


Paul Congo,
Executive Director,
Access Monterey Peninsula



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